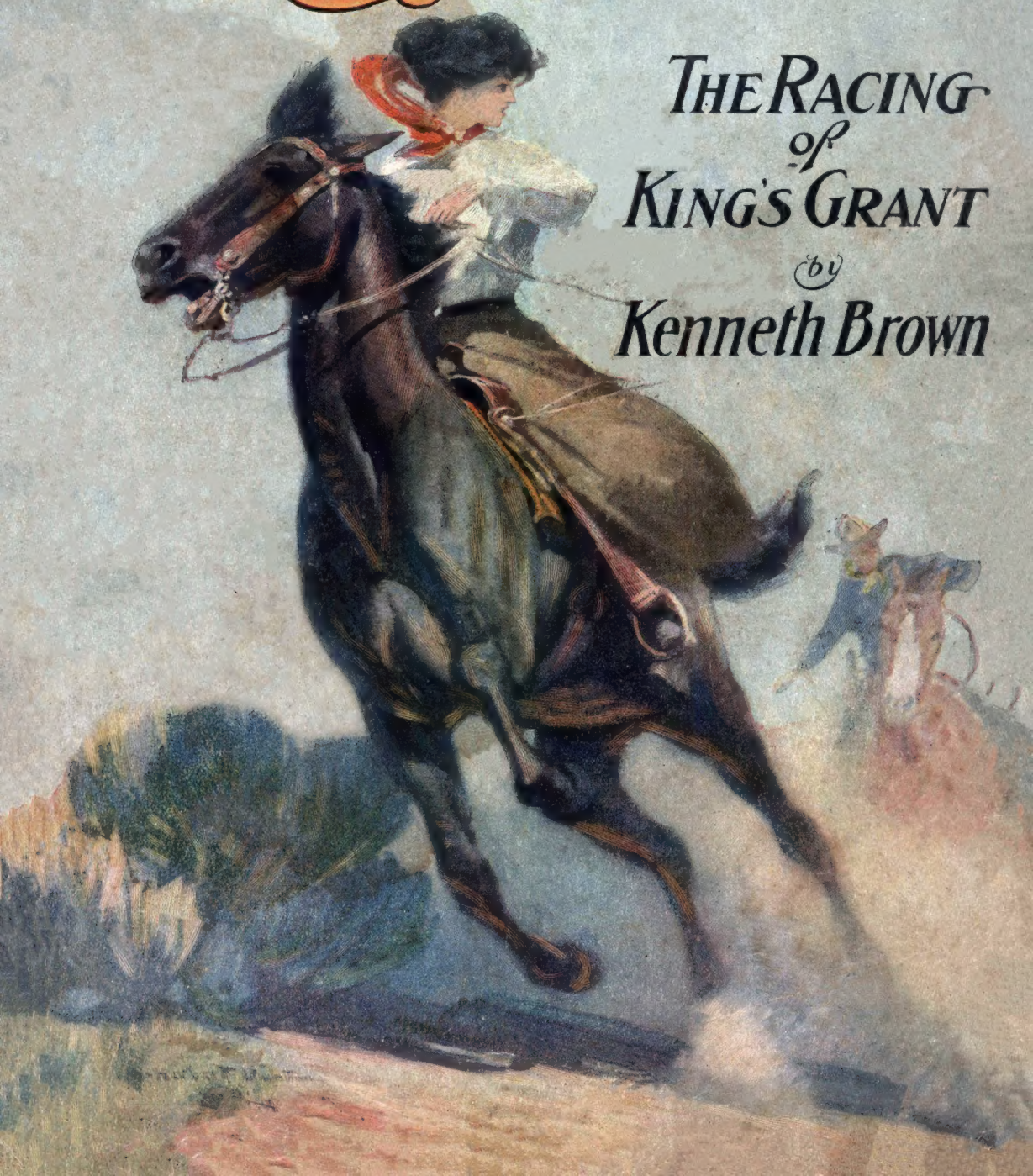
COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL
No. 6 Vol. 36 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

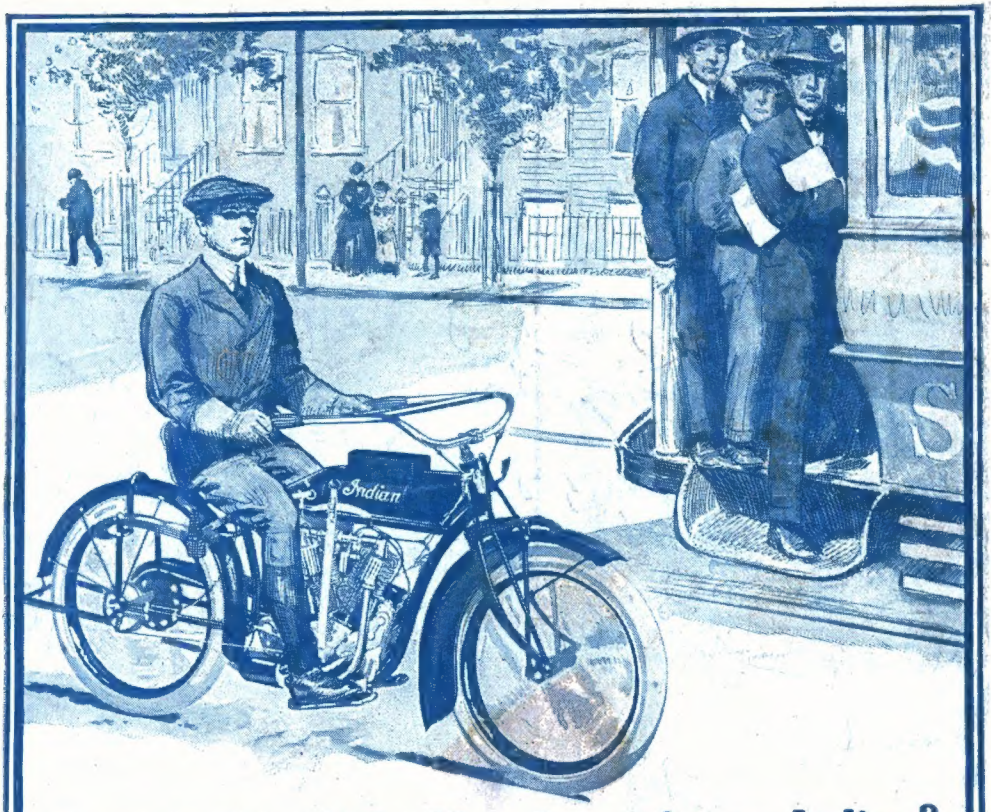
PUBLISHED JUNE 7, 1915



The Racing of King's Grant

by

Kenneth Brown



Doesn't this Make You Long for an Indian?

THE pleasure you get out of going to a ball game, an outing, a week-end vacation, a fishing trip, to and from work—anywhere—depends upon *how you get there.* The easiest, quickest, most comfortable way is to ride a 1915

Indian Motocycle

That's the way to avoid hot, jostling crowds, stuffy cars, loss of time, ill-humor.
Sit on an Indian and enjoy a ride that a touring car can't surpass for speed and solid comfort. The *Cradle Spring Frame* makes you forget the rough spots, for it absorbs all road vibrations.

Go where you will, when you will, on schedule time Fill every mile with sunshine, fresh air, keen relish. Leave the hot city behind—spin into the cool, sweet open country. Get all out of life you're entitled to—on an *internationally popular Indian.*

Indian Holds World's Economy Record

H. Cameron, riding a 7 H. P. stock Indian Twin, covered 91.2 miles on half a gallon of gasoline on February 17, at Sacramento, under F. A. M. sanction and supervision.

2,800 Indian dealers—everywhere—assure over-night service—anywhere

Write for 1915 Catalogue, fully describing and illustrating the 9 Basic Innovations and 20 detail refinements embodied in the 1915 Indian —"Master of Them All." One, Two and Three Speed Models.

HENDEE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 719 State Street, Springfield, Mass.

(Largest Motorcycle Manufacturers in the World)

Branches and Service Stations: **Chicago Minneapolis Kansas City San Francisco Atlanta Dallas Toronto London Melbourne**

Cut Out Guess Work

Afield and At Traps

CHANGE over to the Remington-UMC "Speed Shells"—"*Arrow*" and "*Nitro Club*"—and your good old duck gun will give you new reason for liking it.

Shoot "Arrow" and "Nitro Club" against any shot shells in the world, afield or at the traps.

You will find that these famous Remington-UMC Shells are the fastest by a good round margin.

It is the Steel Lining that does it—grips the powder, keeps all the drive of the explosion in a straight line behind the shot. A Remington-UMC specialty that is giving the "Speed Shells" first place with Sportsmen everywhere.

Ask for "Arrow" or "Nitro Club." You can be sure of getting them from the dealer who displays the *Red Ball Mark of Remington-UMC. Go to him.*

Remington Arms-Union Metallic Cartridge Co.

WOOLWORTH BLDG. (*233 Broadway*) *NEW YORK CITY*

Write for descriptive circular

The "SPEED SHELLS"—

Earn Larger Salaries Than Any Other Class of Men

We will teach you to be a high grade salesman, in eight weeks by mail and assure you definite propositions from a large number of reliable firms who offer our students opportunities to earn good wages while they are learning. No former experience required. Write today for particulars, list of hundreds of good openings and testimonials from hundreds of our students now earning $100 to $500 a month. Address nearest Office.

Dept. 505, **NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSN.**
Chicago New York San Francisco

SHORTHAND IN 30 DAYS

Boyd Syllabic System—written with only nine characters. No "positions"—no "ruled lines"—no "shading"—no "word-signs"—no "cold notes." Speedy, practical system that can be learned in 30 days of home study, utilizing spare time. For full descriptive matter, free, address, Chicago Correspondence Schools, 976 Unity Building, Chicago, Ill.

Remoh Gems

Look and wear like diamonds. Brilliancy guaranteed forever. Stand file, acid and fire like diamonds. Have no paste, foil or backing. Set only in 14 karat solid gold mountings. About 1-30th the price of diamonds. A marvelous synthetic gem—will cut glass. *Guaranteed not an imitation and to contain no g'ass.* Sent C. O. D. subject to examination. Write today for our 4-color catalog DeLuxe, it's free.

Remoh Jewelry Co., 650 Washington Ave., St. Louis

DO YOU LIKE TO DRAW?

Cartoonists are well paid

We will not give you any grand prize if you answer this ad. Nor will we claim to make you rich in a week. But if you are anxious to develop your talent with a successful cartoonist, so you can make money, send a copy of this picture, with 6c. in stamps for portfolio of cartoons and sample lesson plate, and let us explain.

THE W. L. EVANS SCHOOL OF CARTOONING
835 Leader Building, Cleveland, Ohio

THIS JOB PAYS BIG

WE positively teach you by mail to earn $25 to $50 weekly as Chauffeur or Repairman. School recommended by Auto Companies. Best System. LOWEST PRICE. MODELS FURNISHED. Graduates make Big Money. *H. A. Hobbs says: "Received offer of $100 a month, day I got Diploma." R. N. Casanova made $20 in one day.* **Send for Free Auto Book, with names of students, and salaries they earn. We assist to secure position.**

PRACTICAL AUTO SCHOOL
68-F BEAVER ST., NEW YORK CITY

Rider Agents Wanted

in each town to ride and show a new 1915 model **"RANGER"** bicycle. Write for our *liberal terms.*

DELIVERED FREE on approval and **30 days' trial.** Send for big **free** catalog and particulars of *most marvelous offer* ever made on a bicycle. You will be astonished at our **low prices** and *remarkable terms.*

FACTORY CLEARING SALE—a limited number of old models of various makes, $7 to $12. A few good second-hand wheels $3 to $8. Write if you want a bargain. **Tires,** lamps, wheels, sundries, parts, motorcycle supplies of all kinds *at half usual prices.* **Write us** before buying.

MEAD CYCLE CO., DEPT. G-38 CHICAGO

3 1/3c a Day

now buys a dazzling Lachnite Gem. Their brilliance is eternal—they stand fire and acid tests and cut glass like diamonds. Cost but one-thirtieth as much. **Set in solid gold.** The newest designs. Sold on Free Trial. See our new jewelry book.

Write for Big Jewelry Book Your name and address is enough. No obligations whatever. Write today—now.

HAROLD LACHMAN COMPANY
12 N. Michigan Avenue, Dept. E-114, Chicago, Ill.

The Key to Success
Stop Forgetting

Prof. Henry Dickson Principal

Increase Your Efficiency

The secret of business and social success is the ability to remember. I can make your mind an infallible classified index from which you can *instantly* select thoughts, facts, figures, names, faces. Enables you to *concentrate, develop self-control, overcome bashfulness, address an audience.* Easy. Simple. The result of 20 years experience in developing memories of thousands. Write today for copy of my book "How to Remember" and *Copyrighted Intensely Interesting Memory Test Free,* also how to obtain FREE copy of my book "How to Speak in Public."

Dickson School of Memory, 960 Hearst Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Learn to PAINT SIGNS and SHOW CARDS

There's Money in It

I'll teach you personally by mail. 16 years' successful teaching. Big field everywhere. Earn

$18.00 to $45.00 a Week

Mr. Eckert, (Pa.) says: "Each lesson so interesting I can hardly wait for next." Postal brings particulars and new literature.

DETROIT SCHOOL OF LETTERING.
Chas. J. Strong, Founder. Dept. 2306, Detroit, Mich.

FREE BOOK ON MOTORING

A NEW IDEA OF TEACHING BY MAIL WITH DYKE'S WORKING MODELS CHARTS, MANIKINS, ETC.

Explains how we assist YOU in the Auto Business as Repairman, Chauffeur, Salesman or Auto Mechanician with **DYKE'S NEW IDEA WORKING MODEL SYSTEM** of teaching by mail and our new idea **EMPLOYMENT PLAN.** Let us tell you the names of some of our students and the salaries they are drawing. Don't miss it—**SEND FOR BOOKLET NOW!**

Beware of imitators. This is the original and only system of its kind in the world Models made in London.

DYKE'S SCHOOL OF MOTORING, Box 86, Roe Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.
All electric starters and magnetos simplified.

Secure A Good Government Position

Write today for **The Civil Service Book** which tells how the I. C. S. can train you at home and in your spare time for any Civil Service examination. The book is free. Writing for it places you under no obligation. If you are an American over 18 and can read and write, the way to U. S. Government positions is open to you. Send for the book and learn how the I. C. S. can help you. Over 700 persons secured positions in the U. S. C. S. last year through I. C. S. training.

International Correspondence Schools
Box 8550 Scranton, Pa.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

offer employment for life at a salary ranging from **$800** to **$1800** per year, with short hours under pleasant conditions and no fear of "layoffs" or strikes. American citizens 18 or over are eligible. Our 64-page booklet contains list of positions, requirements, etc., and tells how you can prepare for "Exams" under the personal supervision of a former U. S. Civil Service Secretary-Examiner. Booklet is **FREE,** without obligation. Write to-day.

PATTERSON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL
1536 Livingston Bldg. Rochester, N. Y.

get this book free

128 pages showing why more law-trained men are wanted. Modern conditions **demand** that you be law-trained. It is **necessary** for Success. No use doubting it! It's a **fact.** Learn why. Our book also shows you how men who are unable to leave their home or business can become law-trained by a new and improved reading course prepared by 60 eminent legal authorities and endorsed by U. S. Congressmen, and by Judges and Lawyers **everywhere.** Written in plain simple language, and easy to understand. Practical, yet reads like a story. Exceptionally favorable offer now being made to ambitious men. Write for particulars and free book. No obligation.

BLACKSTONE INSTITUTE
20 W. Jackson Blvd., 2PG, Chicago, Ill.

HOLMAN DAY has a novel of the sea in the next issue called "A Two-Spot in the Big Game"

VOLUME XXXVI NUMBER 6

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS

JUNE 7, 1915

COVER DESIGN . . . . . **W. Herbert Dunton**

THE RACING OF KINGS GRANT. A Complete Novel, . **Kenneth Brown** . . 1
Humor and pathos are wonderfully blended in this story of Virginia, and the true lover of horses will be delighted with the performances of the thoroughbred from his breaking to his making.

HUMAN NATURE, INCORPORATED. A Short Story, . **Holworthy Hall** . . 59
The irrepressible "Pepper" goes into business with the same stride as made him the talk of Harvard.

THE BUCCANEERS. A Novelette, ... **H. De Vere Stacpoole** . 70
On a cable-cutting cruise with the queerest crew that any man ever brought together.

THAT INSIDE SONG. Verse, ... **Henry Herbert Knibbs** . 109

EMPTY BARRELS. A Short Story, ... **Bozeman Bulger** . . 110
Proving that there is more in an empty barrel than a full one when it comes to winning the pennant.

CAUGHT IN THE NET. Editorials, ... **The Editor** . . . 122

THE MAN WHO COULD DO EVERYTHING. . . . **Albert Payson Terhune** . 126
A Four-Part Story.
One after another, the characters in this ingenious mystery story appear guilty until you investigate further and find your suspicions unfounded and flickering.

A ROARING FINISH. A Short Story, . . . **Hamish McLaurin** . . 155
How a "diving Venus" has her act built up from a rotten turn to one that brings down the house—a funny stage yarn.

WORKADAY ADVENTURES: THE WELL SHOOTER. Verse, **Berton Braley** . . . 165

DEVISED AND BEQUEATHED. A Two-part Story, . **Donn Byrne** . . 166
Dawson's big moment comes with the swiftness of a midsummer thunder storm and it looks pretty black for the cotton plunger.

THE SHADOW OF GRANITE RIDGE. A Series, . . **Vingie E. Roe** . . . 196
IV.—At Kunman's Bend.

HIGH GRADING AT RAWHIDE. Verse, . . . **Cy Tobias** . . . 204

THE SMELL OF GASOLINE. A Short Story, . . **Wilbur Hall** . . . 205
An enemy to autos villifies them in vain.

THE SAFFRON WITNESS. A Short Story, . . **Raymond S. Spears** . 216
A strange sequence of events leads to an undreamed-of sequel.

Twice-a-Month Publication Issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH and GEORGE C. SMITH, Proprietors. Copyright, 1915, by Street & Smith, New York. Copyright, 1915, by Street & Smith, Great Britain. *All Rights Reserved.* Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part. Entered at New York Post Office as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $3.72. Foreign, $4.44.

WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons who have been thus victimized.

IMPORTANT—Authors, agents and publishers are requested to note that this firm does not hold itself responsible for loss of unsolicited manuscripts while at this office or in transit; and that it cannot undertake to hold uncalled for manuscripts for a longer period than six months. If the return of manuscripts is expected, postage should be enclosed.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $3.00 SINGLE COPIES 15 Cents

THE NEXT POPULAR ON SALE JUNE 23rd

© H. H. Co.

For Appearance, Comfort, Service
Wear Holeproof

Millions of people know that guaranteed Holeproofs are the cheapest hose of first-grade style and quality ever put on the market. They wear twice as long as common kinds, and therefore cost but half as much.

Six pairs of cotton hose are guaranteed to wear without holes for six months. Three pairs of silk hose are guaranteed for three months. If any fail within that time we replace them free.

We use the finest Egyptian and Sea Island cotton yarns — made from long-fibre cotton, which is spun into softer, stronger, finer strands. A mercerizing process—exclusive with us—gives a beautiful gloss and adds 22 per cent more to the strength. With this soft, light-weight yarn, and with our experience, we knit the longest-lasting hose ever made, and they are light weight, smart-looking and comfortable.

Holeproof Hosiery
FOR MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Go see these perfect hose at your dealer's, asking especially for white and buff, the season's popular colors.

Men's, 25c per pair and up; women's, 35c per pair and up; children's, 35c per pair.

The genuine are sold in your town. Ask for dealers' names. We ship direct where no dealer is near, charges prepaid, on receipt of remittance. Write for free book about Holeproof.

HOLEPROOF HOSIERY COMPANY, Milwaukee, Wis.
HOLEPROOF HOSIERY CO. OF CANADA, LIMITED
London, Canada

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVI. JUNE 7, 1915. No. 6.

The Racing of Kings Grant

By Kenneth Brown

A novel of the South, of Virginia of to-day. "Horse" and "home" are the two words we naturally associate with Virginia, and in Kenneth Brown's tale you will hear much of both. Virginia has always been fond of horse racing and sticks to the running horse brought from England early in her history. Virginia's love for horses, Virginia's hatred of anything savoring of crookedness or deception, Virginia's respect for tradition and antagonism to changing the old order—these are some of the things you feel as you read. "The Racing of Kings Grant" is different in character from any novel we have printed recently and still you are going to like it a lot.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

CLARISSA LOSES HER BALANCE.

MR. JOHN MAITLAND, till recently president of United Hardware, was casting his eyes over the plantations of Pembroke County, Virginia, with the idea of finding one to suit him for a brood farm for his race horses. The trap he was driving was far too smart to be indigenous to Pembroke County at that time, when the poverty long following on the Civil War had only merged into the general hard times that oppressed the country some twenty odd years ago. Beside him sat his daughter Clarissa, in whose hazel eyes a latent imp of mischief always lurked. Men who looked at her once looked again; and if her eyes happened to meet theirs they usually looked more than twice. Clarissa was the only person who had ever come into close contact with Mr. Maitland who was not afraid of him. In consequence, he was a little afraid of her, although he did not admit it even to himself.

On the rear seat of the trap were Mr. Maitland's son Arthur, and his sister Eulalie, whom the old-fashioned novelists would have described as a lady of uncertain age. All the Maitlands, with the exception of the latter, wore riding clothes.

"The next gate should lead into Kings Grant, shouldn't it, father?" the girl asked.

"Yes. That must be the house, off there to the right."

It stood in a large grove of trees, on the summit of a gradual rise of some

height, its white pillars and red brick indistinctly to be made out through the foliage. When they reached the plantation gate they were still half a mile from the house. An irregular avenue of hoary old cedar trees led up to it, and their straggling limbs caused the Northerners in the high trap to duck their heads.

"They ought to be trimmed up," Mr. Maitland said, with crisp decision. The voice matched the square chin and resolute face.

"Ah, but what noble old patriarchs!" Miss Eulalie burst forth. "It would be a desecration to lop off their reverend limbs."

"Well, their reverend limbs wouldn't hit me in the eye twice, desecration or no desecration," her brother responded.

Miss Eulalie was silenced. Not many disputed with Mr. Maitland; the last of the independent hardware people had been swallowed up three years ago, and what he said "went."

"They are great, though," Arthur put in. "They must be a hundred years old."

"They are something money can't make," Clarissa added, with a trifle of malice in her tone.

"Money can *buy* them," her father retorted, stifling a virulent exclamation as a branch of the cedars slapped him revengefully in the face. "Why don't they keep things shipshape down here?"

Clarissa laughed. To her half the charm of Virginia lay in its wildness, its unkemptness, in its haphazard fences and its clay roads.

"Good Lord!" her father burst forth. "Where would United Hardware be if I had allowed the waste that you see here on every hand?"

The girl laughed again. When you have a father who is no less a genius in saving fortunes out of the scraps that former methods threw away than in organizing a trust, you can hardly expect him also to possess æsthetic appreciation of negro cabins with their chimneys out of plumb.

In addition to his business abilities there was good old British sporting blood in the veins of John Maitland, and for some years he had had a small racing stable. He had gathered together a useful lot of animals, and had secured the services of Herbert Jenkins, one of the ablest trainers on the American track. Now, forced to give up business, he had decided to take up that most fascinating and uncertain part of the game, the breeding of his own thoroughbreds. To find a suitable brood farm was the reason for his visiting Virginia, as he had already visited Kentucky. He intended to be thoroughly convinced which part of the country was best for his purpose before he invested a cent. With only one factor had he not reckoned. Clarissa had liked Kentucky; she fell in love with Virginia.

Thus fate had already decided where *Mr. Maitland should buy his brood* farm.

The trap was stopped by the gate of the house-yard fence. A little beyond, amid pleasant surrounding of trees and turf, stood Kings Grant House. Mr. Maitland reined in his horses, and all four looked back over the undulating country behind them, stretching off into the "flat woods," which reached to Richmond and the sea, a hundred miles away.

Miss Eulalie sighed with sentimental joy. "What a wonderful, wonderful outlook, over hill and dale! And what visions of blue-blooded Virginian aristocracy are not called up by this stately mansion!"

"I'll buy the place," Mr. Maitland announced. "Let's see, Krafft said there were three thousand acres in Kings Grant, didn't he?"

"He also said they could not be bought," Clarissa reminded her father.

"Stuff and nonsense! I never saw anything yet I couldn't buy—except health."

Arthur sprang down to open the gate. An iron hoop from some disintegrated cask held the two sides together. When this was removed they swung wide open, the posts having acquired an outward slant with the passage of time. After the trap had passed through, Arthur found it difficult to close the gate. As fast as he shut one side the other swung open.

"How deliciously quaint!" Miss Eulalie cried.

"Try propping one side shut with that 'quaint' stone," Mr. Maitland suggested sarcastically. "It looks as if it were worn smooth in the service."

Mr. Maitland's tone was often sarcastic in speaking to Arthur. Weak lungs had prevented his going into business. The outdoor life prescribed for him suited Arthur perfectly, but there was always in the older man's manner toward his son a latent hostility which Arthur keenly felt, though he never let others see that he did.

He laughed now, as, accepting his father's suggestion, he shut the gate with the help of the stone, and the trap drove on up to the house. There was no roadway here, all being overgrown with soft, cropped turf. The house yard was untenanted, except by three melancholy hounds who raised doleful howls when Arthur knocked at the front door.

No immediate response came to the knock.

"The underpinning of the porch of your stately mansion is neglected," Mr. Maitland remarked to his sister, with suave irony. "A few more years of aristocratic neglect and the whole porch will tumble down."

"Hush! There is some one at the window. He will hear you," Clarissa warned.

"Might do him good if he did," her father muttered.

The slats of a blind upstairs turned. Then there was the sound of steps in the house, and the door was opened by a young man of about twenty-eight. For an instant he remained motionless against the background of the hall. His brown hair fell away from a broad forehead, over dreamy eyes darker than the hair. He appeared taller than he really was, on account of his slenderness. He was dressed in a khaki coat and riding breeches and leather leggings, all of which had the air of belonging to a man who spent much of his time in the saddle.

Taking in the group in the trap, he hospitably descended the steps. If he had heard Mr. Maitland's remark, nothing in his manner betrayed it.

"Is this Mr. Randolph Botetourt?" Mr. Maitland raised his hat and asked the question in his most urbane manner.

"Yes, sir. Won't you come in?" the Virginian urged hospitably.

"Thank you. We have heard so much about Kings Grant that we ventured to intrude."

"It is no intrusion, sir. It is a pleasure." To an old darky who appeared around the corner of the house with a beaming smile of welcome: "Link, take the horses!"

"Maitland is my name, and these are my sister and daughter and son. We are staying over at Briar Patch."

"Yours is the most historic mansion of Pembroke County, isn't it?" Clarissa asked as he helped her down from the trap.

"And do tell us, is it true that it was granted to your forefathers by King Charles?" Miss Eulalie cried.

"Yes," Botetourt replied, blushing. "That is how it gradually came to be called 'Kings Grant.'"

They passed through the wide, dark hall into the library, where Botetourt

opened one of the blinds to let in some light. The house contained few pieces of furniture, which added to the cool impression given by the semiobscurity; yet what there was was good old mahogany.

Mr. Maitland looked about him with satisfaction. He had thought it likely that he should have to tear down, or partially rebuild, the house, but he saw that this would be unnecessary. Some remodeling there would have to be, the adding of bathrooms, and repapering and painting, of course. He paid no attention to the conversation going on among the others. Abruptly he asked:

"May we take a look over the house, Mr. Botetourt?"

"Certainly." It was a request not infrequently made, and seemed quite natural to the Virginian.

As the party went over the house Mr. Maitland gradually lost his attitude of guest and assumed his real one of prospective buyer. Clarissa noticed the change, and felt a bit uncomfortable. Botetourt, however, showed no resentment, and Clarissa concluded that, after all, he was probably glad of a customer like her father.

"Now I should like to see the cellar," Mr. Maitland announced.

"W-e-l-l, I usually receive my friends above ground," the Virginian drawled, "but if you have a liking for cellars—oh, Link! Get me a lantern or something."

Link appeared presently with an old seven-branched silver candlestick, the stub of a candle in one of its branches. He lighted it, and, somewhat mystified, yet proudly led the party down into the vast system of caverns underlying the house.

"There's room here for all the furnaces and wine cellars and storerooms one would need," Mr. Maitland observed.

"Yes, sir; that's so. My furnace is a darky and a woodpile, and my wine cellar is mostly a jug of whisky in the cupboard; but, as you say, there's room here for 'most anything." As they emerged from the cellar he asked innocently: "Would you like to take a look up in the attic?"

"No, I thank you. I suppose the roof leaks?" Mr. Maitland inquired sharply.

"Only in spots," Randolph answered deprecatingly.

"H'm!" After a little more inspection Mr. Maitland said: "Now I should like to take a look over the plantation."

"Certainly, sir. It's pretty large, so perhaps we had better ride. Let me see if I can mount you. One of you ladies can have my riding horse, with an old sidesaddle of my mother's——"

"Oh, I shan't come," Miss Eulalie interrupted. "I will wait on the porch. I am sure I shall never tire of the view it affords."

"Ve'y well. I'm afraid you gentlemen will have to do with plow horses. One of my teams is not working this afternoon, and I can mount you that way."

With Link's officious assistance the party was presently mounted, and set out to view the plantation. Mr. Maitland had Ran's own saddle, a good English one; Arthur, only an indifferent rider, felt content in a deep Morgan which the teamster used, while Ran himself had thrown a couple of bags over his mount and fastened them on with a surcingle. Clarissa found her seat in an old-fashioned buckskin-covered saddle singularly insecure.

Randolph noticed, and laughed.

"It's hardly fair to expect you to ride a trotting horse on a saddle like that. It's only suited to gaited horses. That was originally my grandmother's saddle. They say she used to follow the hounds with the best of them till she was nearly sixty years old."

"Do you mean to say that she jumped without a leaping horn?"

"Yes. Probably she grabbed hold of the off pommel once in a while."

Behind the house stretched away a long expanse of rolling country, to a range of mountains, wooded from base to summit, which formed the western horizon. Much of Kings Grant was in blue grass, somewhat grown up in sassafras and persimmon.

Mr. Maitland had pulled himself up on his rough plow mare carelessly, regarding her merely as a means of locomotion, but he had not ridden a dozen steps before he noticed that this was not an ordinary work animal beneath him.

"Pretty well bred, this mare, isn't she?" he asked.

"She's thoroughbred—all the horses on this place are. My grandfather used to be a great race-horse man. There's a half-mile track he built, over on the bottom yonder. He never would have anything but thorough blood on the plantation. He said if it couldn't run it made the toughest work horses in the world. I reckon it did, too," Botetourt concluded, with an infectious grin. "If they hadn't been tough they'd have died."

Ran's mare sidled up to the first gate leading out of the twenty-acre barn lot, in a knowing manner, for him to unfasten it, but it resisted all his efforts to open it without dismounting.

"Most of my gates aren't made primarily for easy opening," the Virginian apologized. "When I go out by myself I usually jump some low place in the fence."

"Could you jump this fence?" Clarissa asked eagerly.

He reined back his mare a few yards, and with a critical eye picked out the best place in the fence, and put her at it. The mare raised her head, pricked forward her ears, and glided over the fence with an easy lunge. As Ran turned her around he was horrified to see Clarissa's horse bolt for the fence and fly it with a huge bound.

Too much surprised to resist, the girl yet tried to tighten the grip of her knees on the pommels, as she had been taught in riding school. But by the absence of the leaping horn this only tended to unbalance her the more, and when the horse alighted on the other side she fell forward over the horse's off shoulder.

Botetourt had anticipated this, and, with a swiftness which his ordinary movements would not have led one to think him capable of, he slipped from his mare and caught Clarissa before she touched the ground.

He felt her supple body in his arms and her cheek against his. Then Clarissa was on her feet again.

"I *did* fall off easily," she gasped a bit hysterically. "I'm afraid I—I am not your grandmother."

To which Ran, his own voice not quite steady, replied: "I'm glad you're not."

CHAPTER II.

MR. MAITLAND MAKES AN OFFER.

With ever-increasing satisfaction Mr. Maitland and his party continued their ride over Kings Grant Plantation. Nowhere else in Virginia had Mr. Maitland seen such grass fields as here.

"How much pasture land have you got?" he asked.

"There are about a thousand acres in this field," Botetourt replied. "Then there are two smaller ones of three and four hundred acres."

"You are fortunate to have so much grass land on your plantation."

"Yes. I suppose that is the result of our love for horses—usually not a very thrifty taste," Botetourt replied.

Mr. Maitland's mind was already busy sketching out the disposition of the various fields. Over there was the knoll where the main stables should be.

He could bring water to it from some spring in the mountains. Along that valley he could make a series of paddocks for the brood mares and their colts. Near the half-mile track should be a training stable.

A little way behind rode Clarissa and Arthur. "Isn't it all great!" exclaimed the latter enthusiastically, though in guarded tones. "And did you ever see anybody so absolutely at home on a horse as Mr. Botetourt? If I could ride like him I wouldn't ask for anything better."

Clarissa nodded, a dreamy look in her hazel eyes as they dwelt on this fair landscape. From out a patch of woods appeared a troop of thoroughbred colts of varying ages. They came galloping up to the party, circled around them, and stopped at a little distance, snorting disdain at their tamed brethren.

"Those yours?" Mr. Maitland asked.

"Yes. I breed three or four a year, and turn them loose to grow up here."

"Do you race any of them?"

"Only in bush races. There's always the hope that one will turn out a Futurity winner, you know."

"Yes, I know," the magnate assented grimly. "I've got the same microbe myself."

"I wonder where the brown is?" Botetourt said to himself.

As if he had only been standing behind to make his entrance the more spectacular, there now dashed out of the woods a superb seal-brown gelding, his summer coat glistening in the sun, and his four white stockings flashing as he ran.

"Ah!" burst from the Northerner's lips.

"Doesn't bear out the old saying, 'Four white feet, feed him to the crows,' does he?" Botetourt remarked. "He's five years old, and for two years I've tried to catch him off and on without ever laying a hand on him."

"Why don't you catch him in the winter, when you stable the colts?"

Randolph laughed. "They've never been stabled. I just let them run to a stack of clover, and they make out all right."

"What would you take for him?" Mr. Maitland inquired casually.

"As he stands?" Ran asked, with a grin. "Or in halter?"

"I should want him delivered naturally."

"To tell the truth, I don't believe I'll sell him. His granddam carried my father in the war till he was killed at Bull Run. She stayed beside his body during the whole battle, and this brown colt is the only descendant of hers there is. Some day I'm going to make friends with him."

"H'm!" said Mr. Maitland. He made up his mind to own the brown gelding, but first he wished to get the plantation. It might simplify matters to buy it with all it contained.

As they were on their way back to the house Mr. Maitland asked: "Well, what will you take for your place?"

Botetourt was not unprepared for the magnate's question. "It isn't for sale," he replied good-humoredly.

"It suits me for a stud farm," Mr. Maitland went on briskly, "and I'll make you an offer that you can't afford to refuse. The outside market price for your place would not be more than ten dollars an acre—thirty thousand dollars, with the buildings thrown in. I'll give you twelve dollars an acre. That is, let me see, thirty-six thousand dollars—six thousand more than it is worth. I don't suppose you've any constitutional objections to selling, provided the price is right?"

"I sell my place—sell Kings Grant which has been my fathers' ever since they came to Virginia! Why, sir, would you sell—your daughter?"

For an instant Mr. Maitland was convinced by the tremor of passion in the

young man's voice. Then his shrewd common sense reassured him. Botetourt was a better bluffer than he had suspected. But two could play at that game.

"Oh, very well!" he answered easily. "There are plenty of other places to be gotten."

Leaving this to sink into the Virginian's mind, Mr. Maitland turned to other topics, and did not revert to the matter of buying Kings Grant during the rest of his visit.

Randolph Botetourt watched his guests drive off down the winding lane between the big ragged cedars. Clarissa waved her hand and Arthur his hat, just as they passed from sight. When they were quite gone the Virginian pushed his hat back from his forehead and walked off to where he could get a comprehensive view of his house.

He stood surveying it, whistling softly to himself. It was a noble pile. The whitewashed brick pillars leading up to the pediment, the generous, inviting porch, the big red brick wings, all formed such a habitation as he had supposed only the chosen of the earth were permitted to dwell in. Yet it was true—as his eyes began to study certain details—that one corner of the porch was sagging. He had never thought much about it, because there was always plenty of porch left for himself and his friends. Next he walked down into the cellar, where he had conducted the Maitlands a couple of hours ago.

There was a big crack in the cement in one room, and a fine deposit had silted in. He had always known it was damp—in wet weather. And though it was quite true, as he had intimated, that he did not receive his friends in the cellar, he no longer thought of it with the debonair air he had worn while making the statement to the millionaire.

Botetourt had heard Mr. Maitland's sarcastic reference to "aristocratic neglect," and it had come to him with the force of a revelation. He was now looking at his place through the keen eyes of Mr. Maitland. Life had grown complicated in the last hour. With a rueful shake of his head, he called Link to saddle his horse. He wished to ride over to consult one to whom he frequently went for good advice.

Lancelot Gordon, his second cousin, had been a great chum of his ever since, as a big boy of seven, he had led her toddling about the lawn and built little houses for her out of corncobs. She was the motherless daughter of a scholar whom the war, and the immediate necessities which followed, had forced to become an indifferent farmer. Mr. Gordon could not put his heart into his work. Books were to him the only things worth while, and he was always willing to go without new clothes or better food in order to buy books. Thus "Lance" had become the practical member of the family. From a chubby little thing she had grown to be a lovely girl with a magnificent figure, which never showed to better advantage than when she was galloping cross country as fearlessly as Ran himself. Her big brown eyes, clouded by dark lashes, had a singular capacity for winning friendship—and more.

She had been on frequent visits to the North, and thus seemed to her cousin well fitted to resolve the doubts that were now troubling him. He found her in a short skirt of blue denim, her sleeves rolled up above her elbows, putting the finishing touches to an artistic job of whitewashing the chicken house.

"Hello, Ran! You're just in time. Jump off and help me move this row of nests."

Randolph threw the bridle reins over his horse's head on to a picket in the

garden fence, and sprang to her assistance.

"Isn't it neat and clean?" she said, with a trifle of bravado in her tone. "Wouldn't catch a nigra boy doing a job like that."

"It is fine, but why don't you let Sam do it?" Ran protested, although he knew that Lance was often obliged to turn her hands to many things not included in the old-fashioned Southern ideas of what a lady should do.

"Sam's plowing in the vegetable garden, and father's working in the vineyard—and this had to be done," she replied shortly. "What brought you over here at this time of the day?"

"I want to ask you about something. You know the Maitlands, staying down at Briar Patch? Well, they came over to pay me a visit to-day, and incidentally to buy Kings Grant."

"And what did you do to the poor things?"

"Nothing. I was lying down in my room, reading, when they drove up, and I heard Mr. Maitland speak of the 'aristocratic neglect' of the place, just because a corner of the porch was tumbling down. I showed them over the house, and he more than hinted that roofs weren't made to leak or cellar walls to crack. Then Miss Eulalie found everything 'quaint,' and Arthur 'picturesque.' In fact, they all seemed to consider me quite run down at the heel."

Lancelot listened, a smooch of whitewash over one eyebrow giving her a rakish appearance, quite at variance with her otherwise serious expression.

"Now, Lance," he wound up, "you've been up North—and you've got a lot of sense besides; tell me, are we as behind the times as these people think?"

"Yes, Ran, I believe we are," his cousin replied soberly. "I never expected you to see it, but we are—we're primitive."

"I know they've more money," he grumbled, "and if you judge everything by money——"

"I don't—as you very well know, Ran Botetourt! But money does give people a chance to cultivate intellectual things. See how intellectual Mr. Arthur Maitland is, for instance."

"I don't think much of his seat on a horse," Randolph said grimly.

"As if that mattered in the least," she retorted, with scorn. "Anybody can ride a horse—not so well as you, I admit, but what does it amount to after you have done it? Mr. Arthur Maitland has written several critical essays that have been published," she ended in a tone of awe.

Botetourt was silent.

"Every one can't expect to do that," Lancelot resumed presently, "but I wish you could see some of the places up North—not of rich people, either. They're so neat and well kept. Ran, we *are* slack and behind the times."

Botetourt rode home again in an uncommonly serious mood. So lost was he in his own thoughts that he let his horse degenerate from his usual smart walk into a loaf, which only the memory of past training kept from actually turning into grass nibbling by the wayside.

At length the young man gathered up the reins lying loosely on the horse's neck.

"Well, if I'm behind the times, the only thing to do is to catch up with them," he remarked cheerfully.

CHAPTER III.

BOTETOURT'S ANSWER.

A week later Mr. Maitland again came up the lane of Kings Grant, this time alone. He wished to see Botetourt without the disturbing presence of a third party. Mr. Maitland had not wasted the time since his first visit to Kings Grant. He had visited all the large places for sale in Pembroke County, but no other place had taken

his fancy like Botetourt's. He was prepared to pay considerably more for it than its market value—as a man will pay for his hobby. It annoyed him, however, to have to wait and haggle over the matter.

"He's only maneuvering for a little more filthy lucre," he told Clarissa. "If he thought I were about to buy some other plantation you'd see him come around and eat out of my hand tamely enough."

"Why don't you try it?" Clarissa asked, her eyes very bright, and more color in her cheeks than usual.

"It's just what I am thinking of doing," her father responded carelessly.

He took no notice of the rebellious signs in his daughter. Adjoining Kings Grant to the east lay Red Oak, a farm of a hundred and seventy-five acres, belonging to an Englishman, Herbert Spashett, who had come to Virginia, as many Englishmen do, to await in economy and philosophic calm the decease of a relative from whom he expected to inherit money. The said relative having at last dutifully died, Spashett was anxious to dispose of his place and return to England.

Now, if Botetourt still held off, Mr. Maitland had decided to let the matter drop and buy Red Oak. When the young Virginian saw the chance of his lifetime slipping away from him it would put a very different aspect on matters. Grimly the magnate chuckled. He liked to administer salutary lessons to such as tried to cross his will. Yes, he would buy Spashett's place in any case, he decided. It would give him considerably more frontage on the road and would straighten out one of his boundary lines.

Kings Grant House seemed deserted as the Northerner led his horse up to it, not having attempted to master the intricacies of the gate from the saddle. He noticed that the fallen corner of the porch had been mended, and the pillars newly whitewashed, from which signs he deduced that Botetourt was trying to make his place more attractive to possible purchasers.

Hanging his reins over a horseshoe nailed to one of the huge trees in the house yard, Mr. Maitland walked up the steps and knocked at the door. Not even a hound made answer. Only a few bright-eyed game chickens walking about on the lawn with the assured tread of the free-born Virginian chicken cocked an inquiring eye at the intruder, and then walked on again.

"Well, when you are in Virginia you might as well do as the Virginians do, I suppose," Mr. Maitland decided, and he issued a stentorian "Oh, Link!" This was answered by a distant hail, and presently Link came running up.

"Mawnin', Mistuh Maitland—was that you a-knockin'?" he inquired genially. "I was a-hoein' of some onions in th' gyarden patch, an' I di'n' know foh suah was it somebody knockin' or a peckerwood. Marse Ran? Yar's. He's over yonder in the second bottom, in th' cawnfiel'. I'll jus' start you right, an' all you'll have to do is to follow the straight road."

Through the barn lot Link piloted his visitor, and indicated to him the direction of the second bottom. Mr. Maitland thought he had never seen a "straight" road so winding; fortunately his mare never hesitated which road to take, and his trust in her was vindicated when she lifted up her head and whinnied notice of their approach. Botetourt's chestnut answered the signal, and the Virginian galloped up to meet the older man.

"Glad to see you again, sir," he said. "I was just going back to the house. We can take a shorter way than the road you came. That's for wagons."

They struck off straight up over the hills through a thicket of sassafras bushes which pulled at Mr. Maitland's legs and nearly unhorsed him half a

dozen times. Presently they came upon a wood road, where they were able to ride abreast, and Mr. Maitland, without delay, broached the subject that had brought him to Kings Grant.

"Have you been thinking over what I said to you last time?" he inquired.

"I have thought *of* it several times, but I can hardly say that I have thought it over," Ran replied, smiling.

"Then you don't think over business propositions when they come your way?"

"When they are feasible."

"H'm! Price not big enough?"

"It isn't that, Mr. Maitland; it's a matter of sentiment."

"Come now, I like sentiment as well as any one," the magnate exclaimed. "It's on account of sentiment that I want the place. Clarissa likes it—I'm getting it for her. Tell you what I'll do. You may keep a couple of hundred acres from the upper end of the place. Then you will not have to leave the land of your fathers—and I'll pay you the same price for the rest of the plantation that I offered you for the whole."

Randolph Botetourt bent his head in thought. He had never considered the proposition to part with his place less than now, when he fancied it in the hands of another. Mr. Maitland mistook the significance of his attitude.

"Give me your hand on it," he cried, holding out his own.

The Virginian slowly shook his head.

The magnate was irritated.

"Young man, you may find you are making a mistake in holding off too long. The place is in no condition to attract purchasers. Half the gates have only one hinge or none at all. There ought to be an entirely new roof put on the house. To make that cellar right will take a good deal more than you think, and though you have patched up the porch it would take ten thousand dollars to make the house habitable."

A humorous smile overspread Ran's face.

"W-e-l-l," he drawled, "your seat is pretty rotten, and you hang on to the curb rein too much, and you turn out your toes, and it would take five years in the saddle to make a passably good rider of you."

The magnate stared at his companion.

"What the devil——" he began.

"Aren't we playing the little game of telling the deficiencies we have noticed about each other—'trading slams,' I think is what girls call it."

Mr. Maitland threw back his head and laughed.

"You are all right, my young friend," he said. "Whoever picks you up for a sucker will drop you with burned fingers."

The ruffling of the Virginian's temper vanished before this tribute. "By the way," he exclaimed, "have you thought of Red Oak—the place next to mine? It's nearly two hundred acres, with considerable blue grass, and I know Spashett wants to sell. Have you met him?—he's an Englishman."

Mr. Maitland did not reply at once. What was at the back of the Virginian's mind, he wondered? Was it a scheme to anchor him on a small place like Red Oak, and then when Kings Grant was imperative to him, to put his own price on it? For, on the other side of Red Oak, Pembroke's poor streak began, and the ground only brought forth in abundance "old field pines."

"Yes, I've met Spashett," the magnate remarked dryly.

"Nice chap, isn't he?"

"He's all right. The English only need transplanting—like lettuce—to make 'em head up properly. But let's stick to Kings Grant for the present. If you will just put your prejudices aside and look at the matter from the common-sense point of view I believe I can convince you that your own in-

terests will be served quite as much as mine by agreeing to my proposition."

At a sign of dissent from the other he added hastily:

"At least you can listen to my presentation of the case."

"If you wish it, I certainly can do that, though——"

"Never mind about the 'thoughs'; we can consider them later. First, let's just look at the facts. Here you have a huge place producing no more than a farm of a hundred acres ought to. The fault is not yours. You simply haven't the capital. In the old times, with plenty of slaves, and with entirely different economic conditions, it was one thing. Now you are behind the times, and I am giving you a chance to catch up."

"But——"

"Hold on a minute! Just let me finish. You don't suppose Virginia's past greatness was obtained by looking backward? No, sir. In those days Virginia was in front, and her big men were ahead of the times, not behind them."

The Virginian hung his head as if he felt the weight of the other's words, and Mr. Maitland, feeling that the psychological moment had arrived, said kindly:

"Come, my boy, what will you take for Kings Grant?"

Botetourt looked up earnestly at the Northerner. Then slowly and impressively he replied:

"What you say is very true, Mr. Maitland, but Kings Grant is not for sale."

"Do you mean to say that it is not for sale at *any* price?"

"Not at *any* price."

"Then why in thunder," Mr. Maitland burst forth, losing his temper, "did you show me all over your house—*and down into your cellar?*"

At the remembrance of that Botetourt could not keep from breaking into laughter.

"Really, sir, you must excuse me, but —but you know that was your expedition, not mine."

Without entering into the humor of the thought, the magnate demanded wrathfully:

"Then this is your final answer?"

They were passing a small inclosure surrounded by a stone wall. The trees in it had grown tall, and the lilac bushes just inside the wall had themselves become small trees. In friendly intimacy with a tangle of vines and bushes stood gray old gravestones.

The Virginian pointed to the little family cemetery.

"I mean to live here as those who are buried there have lived before me, on this land granted to them by King Charles—and may God grant that so long as there remains a Botetourt he will live here, too, and when he dies be buried there by the side of his sires."

CHAPTER IV.

AN AGENT PROVOCATEUR.

Mr. Maitland rode away from Kings Grant genuinely angry with Randolph Botetourt.

He had by no means given up the idea of having his will in the present case, for opposition to his wishes he had always been able to sweep aside, to buy off, or to override and crush. What annoyed him was the disproportionate amount of time and trouble he should have to expend on it.

"I swear there ought to be a law of eminent domain, forcing foolish people to sell the things they can't utilize properly," he murmured to himself.

At the gate he met another rider, Hurley Krafft, the land agent, a shrimp of a man with a little bullet head and beady black eyes. Krafft had blown into Marytown a few years before, no one knew exactly from where, and no

one had ever learned since. Krafft had adopted Virginia as his State—one might almost say as his native State—with celerity and enthusiasm.

Gruffly Mr. Maitland acknowledged Krafft's obsequious salutation.

"Mighty glad I met up with you-all, suh," Krafft said in his exaggerated Virginian accent. "Have you visited all the plantations on the list I gave you last week?"

'Yes. Don't want any of them."

Too bad you have set your heart on Kings Grant. It will be the hardest place in the county to acquire."

Mr. Maitland did not reply.

"I judge, suh, that you have made no progress with Ran Botetourt," Hurley Krafft went on, furtively watching the magnate. "You remember I warned you befoh you came here the first time that it was not for sale."

Mr. Maitland grunted acquiescence.

The little man leaned over in his saddle, and quivering with earnestness said:

"Permit *me* to try and get it for you."

"You!" The magnate glanced at the other with contempt hardly veiled enough for decency. "If *I* couldn't get it—— You can't make some fool horses drink even if they're thirsty."

"There *are* ways," Krafft urged slyly. "It's a messy job holding a bottle down a horse's throat, but he *can* be made to drink."

Mr. Maitland glanced quickly at him. He did not like Krafft, but he had utilized men of his stamp before. There ensued a silence for some minutes, the magnate pondering, the lawyer furtively watching him out of the corners of his eyes.

"You may buy me Spashett's place," Mr. Maitland suddenly surprised Krafft. "It isn't in the least what I want, but it will go well with Kings Grant. As to—er—acquiring the latter, you understand I countenance nothing illegal."

He spoke sharply, yet perhaps unconsciously his left eyelid drooped slightly.

"Suhtainly not, suh! It would take some money, of course—but nothing you could call illegal."

For a short minute they rode on in silence. Then the magnate reined in his horse, and drew his check book from his pocket. He weighed it reflectively in his hand, and put it back without opening it. Instead, he took out his wallet, extracted a roll of bills, and handed them to the pseudo Virginian.

"Never mind about a receipt," he said.

CHAPTER V.

KRAFFT'S FINGER IN THE PIE.

June is a month of magic on a Virginia plantation, and this June was a little more glorious for Randolph Botetourt than other Junes. He did not pretend to himself that the reason had nothing to do with the purchase of Red Oak by the Maitlands, although they were not going to move there until fall.

He rode back to breakfast one dewy morning to find two visitors amicably entertaining each other in easy-chairs on his porch while awaiting his return. Major Forrest had ridden over on a little matter of business concerning some sheep, and Arthur Maitland was making a friendly call. He had taken to coming over to breakfast every now and then, in the friendship which had sprung up between them, since the first afternoon call of the Maitlands.

"Glad to see you," Ran cried. "Oh, Link! Breakfast ready?"

"In-about," Link replied; then, coming near to take his master's horse, he added in an undertone: "Marse Ran, the coffee done gin out."

"Why didn't you tell me this yesterday when I was sending to town? Now you'll have to slip down to the store and get a pound."

"Yas'r. What haws shall I take?"

"You may ride the chestnut—only don't run him. I'll take a look at him when you come back," Randolph said significantly.

"Naw, *suh!* I wouldn't run him. I'll jus' trot along swif' and comf'table," and the negro was off.

"I hope we aren't putting you out," Arthur Maitland said, having overheard part of the talk.

"Not a bit. Saved me from boring myself while waiting for Link to get me the coffee."

Ran appropriated another of the easy-chairs on the porch, and fanned himself with his broad-brimmed felt hat.

"Ran, Mistuh Maitland's been telling me you're going to have some new neighbors at Red Oak in the fall," Major Forrest said.

Ran smiled.

"We were awfully sorry at first that you wouldn't sell us Kings Grant," Arthur put in eagerly, "but now I'm *glad* you didn't. You might have gone away if you had.. Don't see how you could have stood seeing any one else in your place, feeling about it as you did."

"Well, luckily I don't have to face that, and I value Kings Grant the more now that I am going to have you-all for neighbors. How do you like the hot weather?"

"Oh, I think it's *fine!* Father's going to take the rest of them to Bar Harbor in a week, but I'm going to stay on here for a while longer anyway."

On the broad, cool porch the time passed quickly till Link had "slipped" down to the store at the crossroads and back, and called them in to breakfast —a breakfast attacked with the appetite engendered by their morning rides. With the fourth relay of biscuits, Link remembered to bring in a bunch of letters and papers. "I done got the mail at the same time's the coffee," he observed.

Ran glanced at them, then picked up the top letter and examined it more closely. "What do you suppose that is?" he asked, tossing it over to the major.

Major Forrest scrutinized it, and read from the upper left-hand corner the words, printed in red ink: "'WE COLLECT DEBTS,'" and beneath it, in black: "'Central Ohio Collection Agency, Akron, Ohio'—say, Ran, you're not going to sick those fellows on me for the thirty I owe you, are you?"

Botetourt laughed. "I reckon Virginia will be a good deal harder up than she is now before she will begin to use collection agencies."

After his guests had gone, Ran picked up the envelope and opened it. He found the following letter inside:

CENTRAL OHIO COLLECTION AGENCY.

WYETH BUILDING, AKRON, OHIO.

MR. RANDOLPH BOTETOURT, *Marytown, Virginia.*

DEAR SIR: Messrs. Peters & Peters, and A. B. James, of Marytown, Virginia, have unpaid accounts against you of one hundred and forty-nine dollars and one hundred and twenty-seven dollars, totaling two hundred and seventy-six dollars, and they want the money. We have this account for collection, and have guaranteed to collect, or prosecute. If you owe it, you, without doubt, want to pay, or arrange for payment. Our means for collection are most effectual, and somewhat annoying, and we trust you will save us the necessity of pushing you by forwarding to this office a check or post-office order for the amount, on receipt of which we will return your bills, receipted. No cost at present. Unless we hear from you within a few days you will hear from us. Yours truly,

CENTRAL OHIO COLLECTION AGENCY.

It is necessary that you return this notice with remittance, that further proceedings may be stopped. Please write on back of this sheet.

Randolph stared at the letter in utter amazement. Then he tore it across and across, and scornfully flung the pieces

into the ashes of last winter's fires on the hearth. Never in his life had he felt so insulted. Debts of his put into the hands of a collection agency! Himself threatened with additional expenses of costs at law!

So savagely indignant was he at the affront put upon him that he felt he could not compose himself to his ordinary occupation. He wanted something to work off his anger on, and remembered the brown horse he had tried vainly to catch three times.

"I'll go after that brown devil," he muttered.

Walking to the barn, he saddled the chestnut himself, and, taking a rope halter along, rode to the big pasture field where the troop of thoroughbred colts roamed at will.

He found them shortly. At his direct approach they whinnied and broke into a gallop, their heads held high and their tails streaming out straight behind them. First over one shoulder, and then over the other, they glanced back at him, half inviting him to try his speed against theirs—they, the fleetest denizens of this great field.

A loose colt will gallop unharmed over places where only a maniac would attempt to ride, but to-day Ran avoided no risk that came in his way. His anger against Ohio had resolved itself, under the excitement of the chase, into intense desire to capture the brown leader, with his glittering white stockings which he seemed to flaunt at Botetourt as he ran.

Grass-fed horses, no matter how good their breeding, cannot outlast those fed on oats and corn. One by one the colts lagged behind the brown leader, or turned to right and left, and stopped, their flanks heaving, their eyes staring. At last only the brown was left. He was breathing hard, but showed no signs of flagging. Ran's own chestnut was black with sweat, and laboring. The Virginian nursed him along with all the skill he was master of. They crossed and recrossed the thousand-acre field. Then the brown made straight for the mountain range to the west. He breasted hills as if they were nothing to him, cleared every brook in his way—and Randolph after him.

They came to a fence bounding a mountain pasture where hogs were kept. The brown did not hesitate. He went straight at the fence and flew it in his stride.

Ran's eyes sought for a weak panel. They were all desperately solid—"hog tight," but he would not yield now. Speaking to his mount, and gathering him together, he went at the fence.

Gallantly the chestnut rose, but he had not the strength to clear it. His knees struck the second rail from the top, and to the ground crashed man and horse, amid a cloud of flying rails.

The horse lay as if dead. The man was a trifle stunned, but soon came to himself. His first thought was for the chestnut, who, on this hot day, had carried him through a harder chase than ever he asked of him on a fox hunt in winter.

The horse lay on his side, his eyes closed, breathing deeply. Going to a near-by brook, Ran filled his hat with water, poured some of it over the horse's head, and swabbed out his mouth with his handkerchief.

In a minute the chestnut raised his head, and then scrambled to his feet, looking a bit ashamed of himself.

Ran patted his neck. "He beat us, old chap; grass fed though he was, he beat us. I don't believe there's another horse living that could have done it.'

CHAPTER VI.

DEBTS.

The first Ohio letter was followed in a few days by a second imperious and quite impolite demand for payment.

Ran tingled all over as he read it. It never occurred to him that it was only a stock "follow-up letter," labeled "No. 2," and that in due course No. 3 and No. 4, of even stronger verbiage, would be mailed to him by an inoffensive, mechanical-minded clerk. Such a letter could not be inspired by anything less than personal animus, he imagined.

It is not likely that Botetourt's mail contained more bills than usual at this time, but to his newly awakened sensitiveness on the subject it seemed that they fairly rained in on him. Most of them were not itemized. "Ac't rendered" was the usual reading. He wished that he had paid more attention to the items in the past. There was a bill from the Marytown Ironmongery Company for eighty dollars. He felt certain it had not been so much the last time it had come. Ha! He remembered. He had used their last bill to wrap around a pair of old spurs.

He rushed off to his bedroom and returned triumphantly with the crumpled bill. He smoothed it out and read, "Ac't rendered, seventy dollars." That was only last month, and there was no fresh item on the present one.

Feeling that here was really a chance to make a start on his financial reformation, Ran called for his horse, and galloped into Marytown.

"Look here, you've made a mistake!" he announced gayly as he halted in front of the Ironmongery Company's shop, threw his reins to a small negro boy, and strode inside.

The clerk to whom he showed the bills was surprised at the discrepancy. He went off to consult with the bookkeeper and the proprietor. It was a lengthy consultation. Finally the bookkeeper came to Ran, bringing a big ledger with him.

"Mr. Botetourt," he said, with the utmost deference, "the apparent discrepancy between these two bills came about in this way. Two years ago your teamster came in and got some rolls of tar paper, a keg of tenpenny nails, an extra mower blade. You see—here they are. I forgot to put them on your bill at the time, and we thought we'd say nothing about them, but we finally decided you would not wish us to bear this loss, so I just added the sum to your last bill."

Randolph Botetourt was very green, if you like. He accepted the bookkeeper's explanation without a protest. Only, as he went out of the shop, his brows knit and his jaw set; he was more than ever resolved to extricate himself from this accursed debt which chafed a man like an ill-fitting pair of breeches on an all-day ride.

Hurley Krafft, bustling along the sidewalk, shouted a cheerful greeting to him. The little lawyer took no offense that Ran did not notice him. "Beginning to worry you, are they?" he murmured, looking back at him with a pleased smile.

Ran stood motionless by his horse in the blazing sunshine. The hopefulness with which he had come into town was gone. Instead of making a step in the direction of freedom, he had merely wasted an afternoon. In his mind he added up the total amount of his various bills, and was appalled. He appreciated for the first time how quickly sums of twenty and forty and sixty dollars mounted up into three figures. What could he do—now, at once—to extricate himself from the harassing position he had let himself drift into?

He was roused from his brooding abstraction by a cheerful greeting from Major Forrest. "Whew, but it's turned hot this afternoon!" the major went on, mopping his forehead.

"Mighty good for the cawn," Ran observed.

"Yes; but I believe Main Street is the hottest place in Pembroke to-day." The major took off his broad-brimmed felt hat and fanned himself with it.

Then, as the powerful rays of the sun beat down upon his head, he put it back again. "I wanted to speak to you about those sheep I owe you for."

"Let's step into Jeffries' to get in the shade," Ran suggested.

"N-n-o, I'd rather not go in there. Fact is, I owe him a pretty considerable sum, and he's been after me a good deal lately to pay it. Let's go opposite to James'."

Ran smiled grimly. James was one of the men who had sold his account to the Central Ohio Collection Agency.

"I'll never set foot in James' again. He had a bill against me, and——"

"Oh, I understand," the major assented genially. "We might go into Rubenstein's, only I promised to pay him something on account to-day, and I haven't been able to collect the money yet. But I *can* go into Crocker's," he announced cheerfully.

Botetourt burst into a roar of laughter.

"Major, *I* won't go into Crocker's. Looks like they'll keep us zigzagging up and down Main Street all day seeking some haven of rest where one of us doesn't owe too much money."

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the major, thoroughly enjoying the humor of the situation. "Two prominent citizens like us who cyan't walk half a block without crossing over to avoid their 'crediators,' as the darkies say."

"Lucky it isn't muddy!" Ran chimed in.

"Ha! ha! ha!" The major doubled up. "They'll have to pave Main Street for us in winter if this keeps on. But I just wanted to tell you I'd been disappointed in a little collection I hoped to make yesterday, and I cyan't pay you for those sheep this week, like I'd promised I would."

"Oh, that's all right, major. Any time it's convenient."

From a hundred yards down the street Hurley Krafft had kept his eye on Ran, and when he parted from the major and mounted his horse, the lawyer stepped out into the street and laid a detaining hand on the mane of the horse.

"Good evening, Mr. Botetourt. Glad I met up with you. Saw you coming into town a while back, but you were in too big a hurry to notice me. Fine horse you're on; fine horse!"

"Yes, he's a good colt. Don't know anybody that wants to buy him, do you?"

"Going to sell him? Wish I could afford to buy him, but we town fellows have to scratch too hard to make a living to spend our time riding about the country on blooded horses like you planters. Get off a minute, and come into my office. It's just around the corner."

"No, I thank you. I must be getting along home."

"Come in for just a minute. I want to talk a little business with you." When they were in the office together, Krafft began ingratiatingly: "A client of mine, up in—in Connecticut has commissioned me to loan out some money here. Now I heard that you were in need of a little money——"

"You heard it from whom?" Botetourt angrily interrupted.

"Why—er—I don't know that I can tell you exactly. But I thought if you could use a thousand or two dollars, there wouldn't be a man I should consider better security than you."

The words of confidence in him were soothing to the rasped nerves of the young Virginian, and Krafft's whole manner was so deferential that Ran's quick anger died away.

"Pay it back, you know, any time you like," Krafft went on persuasively. "I'll make the note 'on demand.' That means that you can pay it off whenever it's convenient."

"I believe I could use a couple of

thousand dollars," Botetourt said slowly.

"You can have three or four, if you like," Krafft broke in eagerly.

"I think two thousand will do me, thank you. The fact is," Ran added in an outburst of confidence, induced by the lawyer's whole-souled trust in him, "I have let myself run into debt rather heavily. Two thousand dollars will take care of them all, I believe—and when I've once wiped these out I'll see that I don't get into debt again."

In his sleeve Krafft laughed at the young man's simple belief that he would wipe out his debts by transferring them from one person to another. There were, of course, a few formalities to be gone through. Ran signed a note, and a deed of trust of long-winded legal verbiage. "A mere formality," Krafft explained. And Ran went away feeling that he had cleverly extricated himself from all his troubles, although he had signed a paper which would make it possible to offer Kings Grant at public auction in case he failed to pay two thousand dollars—homestead exemption waived—whenever it was demanded of him.

CHAPTER VII.

PIGEON, OR HAWK.

Randolph Botetourt did some hard thinking during the next few days, but turn about in his mind as he might he could think of nothing from which a large sum of money might be made, unless one of the colts running wild in the pasture should be able to run faster on the track than other thoroughbreds.

Ran rode out again into his big pasture to cast an eye over the bunch of colts in their sleek summer coats. Thoughtfully he stroked his chin while contemplating them. There was money for some men in this cluster of wild horses with the brown at their head—a waste of time and money in them for others.

Of racing Ran knew a little—as a lamb knows Wall Street, as the pigeon knows the hawk. Could he metamorphose his plumage and change from pigeon to hawk?

What young man does not know the answer he gave himself?

The young Virginian might not have been so ready to adventure the racing game had it not been for the memory of the chase the brown gelding had given him some weeks earlier.

"Raish," Ran said to his head teamster, "I want you to lend me two or three horses for a few days."

"Yas'r. Lots o' wuk to be done jus' now," Horatio replied dubiously.

"I know it, but you'll have to make out the best you can without them. I'm going to run down that big brown colt in the pasture."

"Goin' to try an' cotch him by yo'se'f? Better let me bring up all the hands an'——"

"An' scare him off into the next cyounty," Ran interrupted. "No, sir-ree! I'll wear him down gradually by myself. You just leave me your three best horses in the stable to-morrow."

"All right, suh, ef *you* say so."

When Arthur happened around and heard of this plan, he was at once on fire to take part in it. "May I come and help?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course you may come," the Virginian replied. "Only it will be a pretty tedious affair, and you will have to be in the saddle by four o'clock in the morning."

"All right! Count on me," Arthur replied jubilantly. "I'll send in to-day to Hew's stable for a couple more good gaited horses with plenty of endurance, and then we'll make a week of it, if necessary."

Quite as a matter of course he spent the night at Kings Grant, and just as the sun was beginning to lighten up the world the next morning the two

young men set out on their quest of the brown gelding.

As they approached the band of young horses the latter raised their heads, hoping for a race. The cool night had left them full of vigor—and running was their game. Of all the denizens of the field they were the swiftest; none could challenge their supremacy.

In pretended panic they galloped off as the horsemen came nearer, waving their tails and looking back over their shoulders derisively.

Their challenge was not accepted. For several hours Ran and Arthur trotted, or gently cantered after them, never hurrying them, yet never slackening pace. Then they heard the big plantation bell ring, and went in for breakfast with appetites for which many a millionaire would have given a fortune.

"This is good! This is the real thing!" Arthur exclaimed in utter satisfaction, wiping his moist brow between large mouthfuls of hot biscuits and sizzling bacon.

They sallied forth again on fresh horses. The colts had already turned damp at the base of their ears from the early exercise, and dark streaks had appeared in their sides. Now, in the growing heat of the forenoon, they became wringing wet from ear tips to fetlocks, the chestnuts shining like burnished bronze, and the brown colt glistening coal black in the sunshine as he galloped at the head of his troop.

Hour after hour passed without any rest or let-up. The colts began to droop and flag in the noonday heat in spite of their inheritance of fire and courage, and they uttered great sighs of weary relief when Ran left them to go into luncheon—a relief that Arthur shared to the full. The cool, dark dining room seemed a veritable paradise to him, but he was too tired to more than nibble at his food. While Ran was still eating heartily Arthur got up from the table.

"I'll just lie down on the sofa in the hall for a minute, till Link brings up the horses," he said.

Ran saw how utterly tired the boy was. "Look here, old man," he said affectionately, "this is a pretty tough proposition for a chap who isn't born in the saddle, so to speak. *You* haven't lost any horses—better rest up this afternoon."

Arthur shook his head. "I'll try to stick it out," he answered pluckily, but when Link announced the third relay of horses Arthur was sleeping like a log on the black horsehair sofa in the wide, dark hall. With a smile Ran passed him on tiptoe, admonished Link not to awaken him, and himself went out into the noonday glare.

Huge was the disgust of the thoroughbreds at Ran's reappearance, on a fresh horse, to harry them again. Throughout the afternoon he trailed them, and well into the lingering dusk of the evening. The pace had degenerated to a jog trot or walk now. Even for the Virginian, accustomed to living in the saddle, it was a pretty strenuous day. He had discarded coat and collar, and his sleeves were rolled above his elbows. His khaki breeches were thin, and his boots comfortable. He wore little else, and, with the breeze bellying out his shirt, and his broad slouch hat shading his shoulders, he felt that he had decidedly the advantage of the colts.

Arthur did not awaken until the late supper was on the table, and he was sleepily unable to decide whether he ought to be angry with Ran or thankful to him. "I declare that was a mean trick to play on me, just because I happened to drop off into a doze."

Had the Virginian not been in good, hard condition, his fourteen hours in the saddle would have left him too

fatigued for sleep that night. As it was, he did not even turn over in bed until Link, after bawling in his ear, shook him by the shoulder.

Ran half opened an eye. It seemed a monstrous thing to be roused from such slumber.

"Get up, Marse Ran! You done tole me to wake you."

His master did not reply. He was off in sleep.

Again a malign force was shaking his shoulders and driving away the unconsciousness which at the moment was the most desirable thing in the world.

"You done *tole* me to mek you get up," urged the faithful Link.

This time Ran aroused himself to say with solemn fervor:

"Link, you go to the devil!"

"Yas'r, Marse Ran," Link agreed cheerfully. "Time to get up, suh. Yo' haws already saddled foh you. Get up, Marse Ran!"

Link's great virtue was obeying orders, and finally his pertinacity prevailed. Ran dragged his reluctant body from bed, and swashed great spongefuls of cold water over it.

Of Arthur there was no sign. Ran had given Link private instructions to let him sleep as long as he wished.

It was with hollow eyes of absolute aversion that the thoroughbred colts gazed upon their master. Their coats were rough with dried sweat, and Ran laughed as they moved off as stiffly as he himself had arisen from bed. Horses, however, are no more anxious to shoulder the troubles of others than men. One by one, this morning, the colts discovered that only their brown leader was the object of pursuit, and one by one they dropped away from him and went back to their own personal grazing, quite satisfied to let him fight out his battle alone.

The brown kept ever on. He was growing perceptibly thinner, yet he was far from being conquered. From time to time he would dash away at a gait that left his pursuer far behind, and each of these indications of the speed and stamina of the five-year-old rejoiced the heart of the Virginian.

Ran was continually trying to do two things: to make friends with the colt, if that might be possible, and to drive him toward a little barn lot, high fenced for his reception.

For three days this continued. At length, not because his will was broken, but because he was bored so utterly that any change was welcome, the brown permitted himself to be coaxed into the small barnyard especially prepared for him with a horse-proof fence.

When the brown discovered the gate closed behind him, and no other egress, he dashed frantically around the little yard, and had there come the least sign of hostility from Ran, he would have charged the fence and broken through it, or broken his neck in the attempt. But Ran was already making his way, with weary legs, toward the house, the vision of the leather-covered sofa in the big, cool library beckoning to him as the most desirable spot this earth had to offer.

Arthur was there, too, immersed in a leather-bound old tome. He looked up in surprise. "Got him?" he inquired.

"Got him!" Ran replied laconically.

Arthur sprang up and wrung his hand. "I've just been hunting up his pedigree in this stud book I happened to find."

Ran lay back with closed eyes and enjoyed the rest of the tired man, than which no more utter contentment exists. He did not even know he was falling asleep until he found Arthur shaking him vehemently by the shoulder.

"Here, you old sleepyhead, wake up! I've found out all about your colt—his ancestors, that is. Listen to this:

"Twigg, also called Little Twigg. Bay horse, foaled 1778, by imp. James; dam, Puckett's Switch. He was a quarter of a mile race

horse of the very first class. Whenever he was equally matched he was universally successful. He won immense sums of money and hogsheads of tobacco. We have heard his breeder at different times assert that he was the strongest and the swiftest horse in the universe for three or four hundred yards. The only horses in his prime of life which generally attempted to contend with him were Polly Williams and Paddy Whack. He ran upward of a dozen times with both the above horses, and never was beaten but once each, owing entirely to the weight which he carried, which was generally one hundred and eight pounds.

"Is one hundred and eight pounds very much?" Arthur asked, looking up from his book.

There was no need now for Arthur to exhort the Virginian to keep awake. Ran, sitting on the edge of the sofa, was leaning forward and drinking in the other's words, which inflamed all the latent racing blood of his sires.

"Not according to our ideas—but read on, boy!"

"He beat Polly Williams eight times out of nine, for from eighty thousand to one hundred thousand pounds of tobacco. He also beat Paddy Whack eleven times out of twelve, for very large sums of money and tobacco. He was bred and owned by Mr. John Goodesen, of Mecklenburgh County, Virginia."

Arthur's voice was vibrant as he read of the mighty races for hogsheads of tobacco, of this great ancestor of the brown colt's.

"How did you work out his pedigree?" Ran cried.

"Through his sires, Carlist King and his dam. Here's another of his ancestors—listen:

"Black Snake, black horse, foaled about 1800, bred by Hugh Snelling—a colored man—who lived in Granville County, North Carolina, by imp. Obscurity; dam, Harlot, by Bacchus. He was sold in the neighborhood where he was bred, for two hundred dollars; afterward he was carried to Petersburg, Virginia, and resold for five hundred dollars; he then was taken to Philadelphia, and sold for five hundred guineas; from thence he was shipped to the West Indies, and after remaining there for some time his name was changed and he was shipped to Charleston, South Carolina, with a view of getting races made upon him. He *never was beaten,* and won immense sums of money wherever he went. Finally his racing celebrity arose to so great a pitch that he was publicly prohibited from running on any race course in South Carolina."

"Supposing my colt—what shall we call him——"

"Call him Kings Grant."

"Great! Supposing Kings Grant should unite the speed of Twigg with the staying powers of Black Snake!" Ran shouted.

"By Jove! I believe he *will!*" said Arthur, with utter conviction; then anxiously: "Look here, they don't 'publicly prohibit' their racing nowadays if they get too good, do they?"

But with this the house of fancy toppled over, and Ran came down to earth with a laugh. "There's no immediate danger, I reckon, considering he hasn't looked through a halter yet. If he's as hard to break as he was to catch, it looks like I'd have my hands full this summer."

Arthur rose to his feet, and with exaggerated carelessness remarked: "I believe I'll ride over and tell Miss Lance about it. You're not up to any more riding to-day, I suppose?"

Ran smiled at Arthur's transparent wish to go alone. "No," he replied. "I wouldn't get on a horse again to-day—not for money."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BROOM AND THE BROWN.

Arthur was to have joined his family at Bar Harbor in the middle of the summer, but he kept putting off his departure from day to day and from week to week. Although still nominally living at Briar Patch, he spent more than half his time at Kings Grant, and often he and Ran rode over of an evening to call on Lancelot Gordon and her

father—and how large a part of the fascination of Virginia was contributed by this quiet, brown-eyed girl, Arthur was beginning himself to be aware.

Thus he kept putting off his departure until, with a sudden, joyous resolution, he decided not to go away at all. For one thing, he was enthralled by the spectacle of Botetourt's conquest of King—for to this the longer name had been abbreviated.

The descendant of Twigg and Black Snake was no more subdued after he had—with an infinity of pains and no small risk—become haltered, than when he was roaming free. There was neither philosophy nor resignation in his make-up. At Ran's every approach his ears lay back flat against his head, and the whites showed in vicious rims around his eyes.

"He's got to have some way of working off his devilment," mused the Virginian. "Link, get me a broom!"

"Yas'r! D'reckly, suh!" Link bustled about wildly. "Whar *is* that broom?" he muttered. "I done had it day befoh yestiddy, foh sure. Then, lemme see—oh, yes!" The cloud fled from his brow. "I done driv' the hens out'n the gyarden with it. Flung it *at* the old blue hen and disremembered to go fetch it again."

All smiles, Link was off on the run, and shortly reappeared whacking the broom against his leg to dislodge the garden loam which adhered to it.

"Gwine to use it yo'se'f?" he asked, unable to conceal his curiosity.

"Yes, I'm going to give that colt a proper sweeping."

"Better take a fence rail foh *that* devil."

Ran took the broom and returned to the stable, Arthur going with him.

"What are you going to do?" the boy asked.

"Going to give him a chance to do a little kicking," Ran answered, with a chuckle.

"But you don't want to *teach* him to kick, do you?" Arthur asked, in wonderment.

"No, I want to prove to him that he can kick till the cows come home and it won't do him any good."

He cautiously opened the door of the stall where the colt was tethered. Out of the darkness a pair of unshod heels shot viciously at his head, but lacked the range to reach him.

"If you don't look out, old chap, your hoofs will plumb snap off some of these days," the Virginian admonished him gently.

Ran began sweeping around the door, brushing the hay and chaff toward the colt. The latter watched him craftily till the broom approached a bit nearer, then let fly at it, and sent it spinning against the side of the stable. All the revolt of his soul the brown threw into his heels. Twenty times he kicked the broom out of Ran's hands. He scattered its sad straws about the stall; he annihilated that broom altogether, and would have annihilated the man as well had not the latter, while venturing the broom boldly, himself kept a few inches beyond the range of the brown's heels.

"Link, ride down to the store and get me a new broom," Ran ordered his servant at lunch time.

Link eyed the battered broomstick in his master's hand.

"Did you clean *w'ar* it out on him?" he inquired hopefully. "Better get two mo' brooms, hadn't I?"

But a broom, after all, is an impalpable sort of thing for a full-grown horse to vent his wrath upon. By the third broom, the brown discovered that his enthusiasm for the annihilation of brooms was gone; and the time came when Ran could bang the broom against his hocks without eliciting more than a grunt of disgust from him.

Throughout the following weeks Ran broke King by such gradual gradations that the latter never really appreciated

the fact that he *was* being broken. Few men have the patience to do this, and few horses need quite such an infinity of pains taken with them. But the brown was of an indomitable nature. Force would never have conquered him. He would have become insanely vicious or have killed himself in his desperate resistance to authority.

But if a man ever gains the confidence of such an animal, he obtains a horse which he values above pearls and rubies—a horse such as poets dreamed of, and horsemen may know once in a lifetime.

In Virginia, the hardest part of the year's work is over by the middle of the summer. Then the hay is harvested, the stacked wheat awaits the pleasure of the wandering thrasher, and the corn has received its last working and is "laid by," to be no more trouble until it is ready to be cut.

At this time there springs up all over the State a lot of little race meets—bush races—where planters of sporting proclivities pit their horses against each other's, and where all the rest of the county comes together and enjoys itself. Virginia has always loved horse-racing, and sticks to the running horse, brought from England early in her history.

In spite of Ran's faith in his colt—or, perhaps, because of the hopes centered in him—it was an anxious time as the day for his first race approached. Three races on the flat and a steeplechase would call to Marytown all the best of local horseflesh.

On the morning of the races, Ran rode King in himself, accompanied by Link and Horatio, his head teamster, and, of course, Arthur. He had never permitted any one except himself to ride the colt, and no one but Raish even to groom him—a trust of which Raish was inordinately proud.

Ran, Arthur, and their two retainers camped in a patch of woods not far from the track. Link had bounced along on one of the farm horses with a basket dangling on his arm, and from this he produced a coffeepot and a fair picnic lunch. Raish had brought feed for the horses in a bag behind his saddle.

Long before three o'clock, distant shouts came from the direction of the track, and the faint reverberation of galloping hoofs. King began to prick up his ears and to paw the ground, in spite of Raish's soothing ministrations, and Arthur wandered about the horse like a restless ghost. Finally Botetourt himself could stand inaction no longer and told Raish to put the saddle on King, and they would go over to the track. Racing was no new thing to him. Before the last few pounds had grown on his slender frame, he had often ridden his own or his friend's horses in these local meets, and he had a wonderful faculty for coaxing a steed to put forth one more last effort to finish a nose in front of his competitors. Yet to-day he was excited and nervous, as he had never been before.

The first person they met on the track was Hew, the livery-stable keeper. "Hello, Mr. Botetourt! That the horse you have entered to-day?" he said, giving King a keen look. "Pretty good colt," he added, his glance lingering. "Think he's got any chance of winning?"

"I have never raced him," Ran replied.

"Who've you got to ride him?"

"I'm going to ride him myself."

"H'm! You'll be giving away a heap o' weight—you know they're all at catch-weights."

"Yes, I know; but nobody's ridden him except myself yet, and I don't want to run any risks with him."

Hew's eyes had been roving over the colt with ever-growing appreciation. Confidentially he lowered his voice: "I've got a *good* boy in my stable—

came down from Fauquier last week. He was going to ride Corntassel in the five-furlong—but I can't make any money on Corntassel—she's too well known. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll say that that colt of yours has a chance, I'll let Juneybug ride him, and I'll put a nigger on Corntassel that'll be sure to make her lose. What do you say? Nobody knows your haws, and we can make a pot o' money out of that race."

With a smile, Ran refused this earnest and sincere offer, and continued on his way, avoiding friends and acqaintances as much as possible.

Amid the sidling, balking, kicking bunch of horses on the track, King acted like a gentleman. To be sure, he was quivering with excitement and could not stand still for more than a second, but under the spell of Ran's soothing voice and touch on the reins he obeyed here as he had learned to obey on the plantation.

The distance of the race, five furlongs, was short enough to make the start of importance, especially on a narrow, half-mile track, and each of Ran's rival jockeys was so eager to obtain the advantage that it resulted in half a dozen false starts.

At last the starting flag dropped. "They were off!" and the brown learned from his master's knees and voice and the feel of his reins that this time he was to keep on. At first he held his head high and glanced from side to side at his competitors as if to say: "Who are these presumptuous horses trying to run against me?" And it thrilled Ran to feel, as they thundered down the straight for the first time, that King, while maintaining his place easily with the others, had not yet begun to run.

Around the curve there was jostling and pushing, and one of the two-year-olds fell behind. Ran was pocketed in the middle of the bunch, but as they came into the back stretch an opening presented itself for a second. A word to the brown, and he shot through it and drew away from the others as a bird draws away from earth-bound things. Around the lower turn Ran steadied him. He glanced over his shoulder and saw Corntassel just behind.

In the straight, Corntassel drew up to the brown's quarter, but, without any urging from his rider, King simply surged forward a little faster and finished a clear length in the lead.

King created a sensation in Marytown that day. He won the second race, a quarter mile, by a head, after being nearly left at the post; and all the wiseacres began casting up his chances for the mile and a quarter.

"He's a great sprinter," admitted the sheriff, "and weight doesn't count so much in a short race, but in the mile and a quarter he cyarn't win from Corntassel. Corntassel's a *stayer,* and Hew kept her out of the dash to cinch the other race."

The sheriff's opinion was that of the rest of the talent. With a midget on his back, the brown *might* make a race of it against the favorite, but not carrying Botetourt's weight—and a common hunting saddle besides. Yet King trailed Corntassel for a mile and an eighth, and then crept up inch by inch and passed the game sorrel, in spite of the best her jockey could do.

When Ran turned, after the finish, to ride back to the judge's stand, he saw a fat figure waddling down the track at a speed one would have considered impossible of his build and years.

"Randuf, my boy," Justice Brower cried, grabbing his foot and fondling it as if it had been a long-lost baby, "you rode that race grandly. I want to see you—I want to talk to you. Don't you listen to any of these racing men—they'll be after you thicker'n flies round

a sorghum bar'l. But don't you listen to a word they say. I know 'em. They'll eat you alive! Ran, I can't talk to you now—but promise me to come and see me—no, I'll come and see you—see you to-morrow mawnin', first thing——"

The fat man was torn from his moorings by the press of others, and vanished from Ran's sight, still gesticulating frantically.

About the outskirts of the throng Arthur Maitland danced like a maniac.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUND THE SORGHUM BAR'L.

The day of Kings Grant's first race meet was so full of excitement for his owner that he slept late the following morning. He was not yet through breakfast when Link ushered in a visitor.

"Mawnin', Ran! Well, here I am, like I said I'd be," cried Justice Brower.

"Why, hello, judge! You must have got up *soon* in the morning to be out here by this time. Have a cup of coffee and a bit of bacon?"

"Thank you, I will. I didn't have more'n a bite before I set out. I was bound there shouldn't anybody be here before me. There'll be a lot of 'em, first and last, tryin' to get that colt away from you, but you don't have anything to do with 'em. You just come to me, and *I'll* show you how to race that colt so you'll make *money* out of him. I'm your *friend*—always *have* been your friend—was the friend of your father before you."

"Thank you, judge, but I'm not thinking of selling Kings Grant to any one."

"That's right!" Brower replied, his tone not so hearty as his words. "That's right. I wouldn't *advise* you to part with him—that is, not altogether. Keep an int'rust in him, so's you can profit by his winnings—though of co'se you couldn't think of racing him all by yourself. You ain't had experience enough—and it takes a heap o' experience to make money out of a race haws."

Botetourt was listening with a smile which slightly disconcerted Justice Brower. He edged his chair up closer to his host, and lowered his voice confidentially:

"Now listen to me, Randuf, my boy. That colt of yours oughtn't to mess about in these little bush races. He's too *valuable*. He's liable to get hurt or something—and, besides, people'll get onto him. What we must do is to take him up No'th quietly, get him into some big races at long odds, work the pool rooms all over the country—and then make a *killin'!* Why, boy, we've got the chance of a lifetime! I've been lookin' for something like this for over *thirty* years."

"Well, I'll think——"

"And you couldn't pull it off by yourself to save your life," Brower broke in earnestly. "It'll take capital! I'll finance it all—engage a trainer—and eve'ything. All I want in return is for you to make me over a half int'rust in the haws. That's to protect *you* as much as myself," he ended conclusively.

"How does it protect me?" Ran asked.

"Well—er—you see, your int'rust and mine would be the same—identical, don't you know. I'd want to make money for *you*, same as I would for myself. What do you say?"

"I'll think over your proposition, sir," Ran replied politely.

"Take plenty of time," Brower approved heartily. "I wouldn't ask you to do anything in a hurry. Only when you've been in the racing game as long as I have, you'll find there are mighty few that you can trust—and I thought that if we could settle it all up, here and now, there wouldn't be any danger of your being fooled by anybody else."

"No, thank you. I won't sell a half interest in Kings Grant this morning. A good horse is about the best thing a

man can have, and I reckon I can afford to keep this one for a while—especially since it looks as if he might make enough to pay for his oats and hay."

Justice Brower was not the only visitor to the plantation that morning. Toward eleven o'clock a hired buggy drove up the lane, a diminutive darky climbed down to open the gate, and then the buggy came on up to the house.

Ran happened to be on his porch, and went down the steps to meet it. On the seat beside the diminutive darky sat a tall, lean man with sandy-red hair and lackluster, greenish eyes. He held the reins slackly in his right hand, put one foot on the felloe of the buggy wheel, and leaned his left elbow on his knee.

"Mr. Botetourt, my name is Meetler," the man explained. "I came down from Washington to make a little book at the Marytown races yesterday, and I noticed your horse. He's a good one, and he can win—win on the big tracks. You didn't have anything up on him yesterday?"

"No."

"It was a good thing for us," Meetler went on languidly.

Botetourt waited expectantly. There was something about the man he did not care for.

"I came out to-day," Meetler went on, "to see if we couldn't make a little deal. I suppose you'd like to coin some money out of your pony?" For the first time the bookmaker showed a sign of animation.

"I'm rather expecting to," Ran replied.

"Then I'm the man you want," Meetler said impressively. "There are two ways of racing a horse; one is for millionaires—to race on the level. They win a race whenever they can, and get a lot of notice in the newspapers and walk about with their chests out—but the expenses eat up all they win, and more, too." Meetler cocked an eye at the Virginian to notice the effect of his words.

"And the other way—your way, I judge—is?" Ran asked mildly.

"To run a horse to suit the books—in and out, you understand. To have him win two or three races till the public thinks he can't lose; then, when they've planked down their bottom dollar on him, and make him an odds-on favorite—*pull him!*"

To take offense at Meetler, so ingenuously dishonest, would have been as absurd as to rail at a pig for his appetite.

"It seems very simple," Ran remarked.

"It is—*if* you get in with the right crowd. That's where *I* can help you. I guess I've pulled more horses than any man living," Meetler asserted with pride. "'N' I'm willing to treat you fair and square. Of course, I should have to have a half interest in him, but then I'd make him a *breadwinner* for you. Well, how does it strike you?"

"There's only one trouble," Botetourt observed blandly. "I'm a millionaire—and I race on the level."

He watched the buggy containing the bookmaker and the little darky drive down the lane.

"To get those chaps as excited as that," he soliloquized, "King must be right smaht sorghum."

And he was. In Virginia a man is known by the horseflesh he keeps. Randolph Botetourt had always been popular in Pembroke, but as the glory of King waxed at one little race meet after another, he found himself a personage. Had it not been so late in the season, Ran might have tried to take King up to some of the big Northern tracks, where there was more money to be made, but it was too late for that, this season, and, besides, the matter of

financing such a racing campaign—without parting with a half interest in the horse—would require some maneuvering.

Arthur had offered to lend him a couple of thousand dollars, but Ran felt a peculiar sensitiveness against profiting in any monetary way from his friendship with the Maitlands. He might have felt that his scrupulousness was wasted—at least, so far as Mr. Maitland was concerned—had he chanced to overhear a conversation between Hurley Krafft and the magnate, one October morning, on the day after the Maitlands returned to Pembroke. It was in Krafft's office. Mr. Maitland, his hands deep in his pockets and his heavy brows drawn down over his eyes, was listening to the eager words of the little lawyer. His manner was not encouraging.

"So you really have accomplished nothing," he commented finally, when the stream of explanation had ceased, "except to lend this young fellow two thousand dollars on his note of hand."

"*And* a deed of trust on his place."

"H'm!" the magnate grunted. "I like quicker action than you seem to be getting."

"You will hardly obtain it here in Virginia, sir—certainly not in forcing an unwilling horse to drink. I remember a gentleman from the city who came to Pembroke once to become a planter—he had read some literary stories about it, and the first morning he went out on his plantation things were going along so slowly that he ordered the plowmen to drive their teams along at a trot. It wasn't a success—I assure you, sir, it wasn't."

Mr. Maitland laughed, taking the parable in good part. "Well, have you any—er—leisurely Virginian plans for getting me Kings Grant?"

"Yes, sir, a very definite plan."

"What is it?" Mr. Maitland asked curtly.

The little lawyer pursed up his lips and was silent for a minute. "Are you sure you want to know?" he asked at length significantly, giving to the magnate one of his rare straight looks.

Maitland studied the diminutive figure before him. Yes, he decided, the man had something up his sleeve—he was not merely bluffing to gain time.

"Well, perhaps not," he assented.

CHAPTER X.

JENKINS MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Mr. Maitland moved to Virginia in a thorough fashion. He not only brought his family, his furniture, and his architect, but was shortly to be followed by his trainer, the celebrated Jenkins, with his brood mares and racing stud.

Ran Botetourt and Major Forrest were the first guests invited to Red Oak. They came to late dinner, two days after the Maitlands' arrival, and were met by their host on the small front porch—soon to be quintupled in size. While the sunset light still mingled with the first rays of the hunter's moon, Mr. Maitland pointed out the different fields where he proposed locating his various stables. His manner was urbanity itself. No one would have guessed from it that he still harbored designs upon the property of his neighbor—certainly his neighbor did not.

"The stables for my horses in training are the only ones that will be out of sight from here. They are to be in that long field next to the boundary fence between your place and mine," he said to Botetourt. "The only thing that bothers me is that I can find no suitable place for a half-mile track without a great deal of excavating and filling in."

"Why, Mr. Maitland, use my track. It used to be considered the best in the State in the old days—it's better than the Marytown track to-day," Botetourt

urged. "The weeds have kind of grown up on it—except on the path where I gallop my brown colt, but I'll run a harrow round it a few times, and put some drawbars in the fence so that you can come right through from your new stables."

Mr. Maitland, the hero of a hundred unscrupulous business fights in which he had never experienced a qualm of conscience in crushing a rival, did have almost a sense of shame on hearing the young Virginian's offer. For he had planned to put his racing stables in this particular field because of its convenient proximity to the track when he should become possessed of the Virginian's estate. His qualms were only momentary, however.

"Thank you. I shall be very glad to use your track for the present," he answered.

Arthur and Clarissa appeared, and a minute later Miss Eulalie, and the conversation became more diversified, although it never traveled far from the Virginian "kindred points of horse and home."

After their guests had left them, Clarissa and Mr. Maitland still lingered out on the porch, in the soft southern wind, from which the hint of winter seemed to have disappeared. They were silent, Mr. Maitland smoking contentedly, and Clarissa, with her elbows on the arms of her chair and her chin resting in the palms of her hands, staring out into the night.

"Father," she said at length, "Mr. Botetourt makes an impression on me, somehow, of getting things at firsthand, not out of books."

"I guess he does," Mr. Maitland assented; then added grimly: "And I expect there's some firsthand experience still coming to him."

Clarissa looked up quickly. "What do you mean, father?" Her voice sounded sharply on the night air. "Do you mean that you are still trying to get his plantation away from him?"

The magnate did not reply at first. In a minute he asked, in a careless voice: "How could I get Kings Grant when he won't sell it?"

In this reply Mr. Maitland was certainly crawling—and there was not another person in the world who could have forced him to it. Clarissa vaguely mistrusted the reassuring words, yet everything else in the world gave her buoyant confidence: the glorious night, and the young Virginian's brave bearing, his hopes for his brown colt—indeed, all life was reassuring to two and twenty, in Virginia. And so her slight misgivings were banished; she rose, put her arms around her father, and kissed him.

"Good night, father. We must be up early to see the beginnings of your buildings."

Mr. Maitland had become sufficiently imbued with Virginia to think first of his horses, and the rows of box stalls began to spring up the next morning, and were finished in a magically short time. Jenkins himself had no fault to find with the accommodations for his horses when he brought them down, and Jenkins was not easily pleased. He even deigned to approve of the Kings Grant track for training purposes.

The famous trainer was a dried-up, taciturn man, who chewed a straw conventionally, and was quite willing to let you believe that unfathomable depths of wisdom rested beneath his check-tweed cap. He believed it himself. One day, however, an unwontedly excited Jenkins came rushing up to his employer.

"Mr. Maitland!" he cried. "I've seen the horse of the century!"

"Well?" his employer replied, without especial emotion.

"I was over at the track just now, when Mr. Botetourt came out with a

brown colt. The instant I clapped eyes on him, I says to myself: 'There's a good un.' I was just sending out Hawaiian Prince. Jessop was up—he's the best stableboy we have—and I told him to draw the brown out and see what he could do. Mr. Botetourt was riding him in an ordinary hunting saddle. Jessop he galloped up alongside him and says:

"'Shall we have a bit of a breather together?'

"'All right—for half a mile,' sings out Mr. Botetourt; and I'm blessed if the brown didn't make Hawaiian Prince pretty near look like a selling plater—and with all that extra weight, too! I signaled to Jess to come off the track, and then I strolled over to Mr. Botetourt. He was tickled to death.

"'My colt is a running trick, isn't he?' he says.

"'Yes, you beat that old crock of ours handily,' I says.

"'Oh, isn't he one of Mr. Maitland's good horses?" he asked, kinder disappointed.

"'*Him!*' I says. 'I don't know why on earth Mr. Maitland keeps him. He never was no good—never could run fast enough to keep himself warm. I guess it's because he was the first horse he ever owned—poor old chap!' So he won't suspect that the Prince is just off the track and in tiptop condition. Mr. Maitland," Jenkins went on earnestly, "if I didn't do another lick of work for you in a year, I'd have earned my salary by discovering that colt for you. You *want* that horse."

Mr. Maitland cocked a grimly humorous eye at his trainer.

"Seems as if I wanted everything that particular young man has," he observed. "But I tried to buy that colt last spring when he was running in the pasture, before he'd ever had a halter on him."

The magnate was not displeased to be able to take Jenkins down a peg. Jenkins was the only employee he had ever had who let him see that he believed he knew more than his master.

"Then you don't want me to try to get him for you?" the chapfallen Jenkins inquired.

"Go ahead and try—only I know his owner, and plain money won't get him."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WINTER PASSES.

The winter that followed was the best Ran Botetourt had ever known. It came to him with peculiar gratefulness after the strenuous summer he had just been through. He had had debts and harassment therefrom; and hard work and harder thinking; and the training of the brown colt and the anxiety connected therewith; and, in addition to all this, one day Arthur had found him in a particularly sober mood, and, inquiring the cause, had learned that he was troubled about the mortgage on the Gordons' place.

"Lawyer Pennypacker is threatening to foreclose. I don't suppose he will, but it worries Cousin Hugh and Lance. I've just sent Cousin Hugh a check to help him out."

"What is the amount of the mortgage?" Arthur asked.

"Three thousand dollars."

"That's not so very much," Arthur said hopefully.

"It's considerable if you haven't got it."

But with the return of Clarissa all Ran's own worries had disappeared as suddenly and magically as they had arisen. His debts—he had all but forgotten them, for never a dun or a bill enriched his mail now. The brown colt rested tranquilly, after his fall campaign, and was only exercised enough to keep him well and hearty. All the old pleasureful Virginia life seemed to have returned to him—not as it had been, but raised to the *n*th degree by the discovery that the world was no

longer a meaningless chaos, but centered upon, revolving around, and subservient to one particularly person.

The fox hunting was especially good that winter. In those days one could hunt anywhere, because there was hardly a fence in the county except of chestnut rails. It was primitive hunting, if you like—before the advent of "recognized" hunt clubs. No one would have cared whether they were recognized or not. Indeed, there were no clubs. A general understanding prevailed that at regular intervals the planters would bring their hounds together and proceed in search of a fox.

To Clarissa and Ran, to Lancelot and Arthur, it mattered little whether a fox was found or not. There were always the glorious hills to ride over. They were golden days that winter—gold in the sunshine, in the red clay, and in the feathery broom-sedge fields. And red-gold persimmons, ripened by the frost and frosted by the dew, hung at just the right height to be gathered from horseback.

Thus the winter passed all too soon —yet hardly soon enough for the eager young lives, which looked forward with even greater eagerness to the promise of the morrow.

March court day was spring overhead, and winter underfoot. The mud came up over the horses' fetlocks; from their bellies hung red-clay stalactites; and feet and spurs were caked with mud. Yet on a telegraph wire sat a little indigo bluebird, singing sweetly. He did not care what was underfoot; he sang to the sky.

Randolph Botetourt, his horse stabled at Hew's, put his foot with pleasure on the solid brick sidewalk. He had gone but a little way down the street when he encountered Hugh Gordon, Lancelot's father. Mr. Gordon was a man whom Ran liked immensely, and for whom he was tremendously sorry. The stoop of unsuccess was on his shoulders; yet under normal conditions he might have attained eminence. The war had plucked him from his books to fight for a cause of which he did not even approve; for, like many other Virginians, he did not believe in secession. When, after four youth-murdering years, it gave him up, there remained no money to complete his education; only a rather poor plantation, with two old parents who needed his presence. He took care of them and worked on the plantation until they died, meanwhile having married. That he always did his duty to his State, his parents, his wife, and, when she died at childbirth, to his daughter, could not make him a success in any occupation to which he was temperamentally unfitted.

"Hello, Cousin Hugh!" Ran called cheerily to the old man—not old in years, but in the hopes which keep men young. "How are things going with you?"

In the ordinarily apologetic bearing of Mr. Gordon there was a strange exaltation this morning. He grasped Ran's hand almost convulsively.

"Ran, my boy," he said, "the age of miracles is not past. Ten days ago I had a communication from Lawyer Pennypacker, who holds the mortgage on my place."

"See here, Cousin Hugh," Ran broke in, "I wanted to see you about that today. I've got another hundred dollars in the bank that I can lend you——"

Mr. Gordon waved the offer aside without even thanking his cousin, so engrossed was he in his own story.

"I had had other letters from Mr. Pennypacker. He had informed me that my interest was overdue—of which I was sadly aware—and had threatened more than once to foreclose the mortgage unless I paid up the arrears. I hardly dared open his last letter. Finally I plucked up courage to do so. Lawyer Pennypacker informed me that in view of the present ease of the

money market he should reduce my interest rate from six per cent to four. And, furthermore, this change in rate was to date back to the making of the mortgage, which would leave my interest paid up three years in advance, including all arrears settled. Yes, I don't wonder you look at me that way—I thought myself I had become insane. I said no word of it to Lancelot—not even after I had been into town and he had confirmed his letter by word of mouth. But now I have the papers; they are in my pocket." He gave his breast a resounding slap. "There is no possibility of mistake."

Botetourt grasped his cousin's hand again.

"There isn't a man on earth I'd rather see struck by such luck than you, Cousin Hugh."

"For Lance's sake I am especially thankful. She has been worrying so about the possibility of losing our home. I shall tell her about it, now that it is all settled—I have not dared to before, lest there should be some slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

After Ran had left his cousin, he began to entertain suspicions as to the ultimate source of Pennypacker's generosity. Closer contact with the small business world of Marytown had made him aware that the money market was never quite so "easy" as his cousin now believed. Nor had Lawyer Pennypacker during the course of an active life acquired the reputation of a philanthropist in disguise.

Ran had proceeded some distance toward the pens, where were kept the cattle to be sold on court days and stock-sale days, when he saw Arthur riding toward him. Into the street, regardless of the mud, Ran stepped, and held out his hand.

Arthur took it with some surprise, for the mud was deep.

"Arthur, you're a good fellow."

"I am. There can be no doubt about that. But what——"

"I've just seen Mr. Gordon——"

At the words Arthur's face became a brick red, and all his equanimity vanished.

"How did—— When did—— Does any one else——" he stammered.

"Not a soul. He's as innocent as a lamb. I only made a guess at it myself."

"Whew! You gave me a scare!" Arthur wiped the moisture from his forehead. "Well, I must be getting along. I've a lot of errands and things to attend to." For the only time in their acquaintance Arthur was anxious to escape from his friend; and, much as if he had been discovered stealing chickens, he rode on, casting back over his shoulder: "Just keep that thing dark, please."

CHAPTER XII.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

Botetourt found Hurley Krafft on the sidewalk awaiting his return to terra firma.

"Morning! Something of a mud horse, aren't you?" Without waiting for an answer, the little lawyer grasped his arm and drew him toward the inside of the sidewalk with a mysterious air.

He drew a newspaper from his pocket, and on its margin scribbled "$5,000." Then he carefully scratched it out, put the newspaper back in his pocket, and cocked a knowing eye at Botetourt.

"Use that or any part of it?" he inquired, in the manner of a conspirator setting the time for an explosion.

"You mean you have that to lend me?"

Krafft nodded.

"No, I thank you. I don't need any money at present," Ran replied.

"All right. Just thought I'd ask you

before I did any one else. I know you've made good use of the couple of thou's I lent you last summer, and I didn't know but you had some other financial scheme up your sleeve. A man that's making money needs money."

"I may be able to use some money later," Botetourt replied carelessly, flattered at thus being treated like a man with large financial interests. "I'm going to race my brown colt on the big tracks this spring, and that will involve considerable preliminary expense before I can expect to begin winning with him; but I don't need anything at present."

"Come to me when you do."

In very good humor with himself and the world, Ran continued on his way through the streets filled with their court-day crowd of countrymen. Near the pens he noticed Justice Brower talking with a plainly dressed man who was a stranger to Ran. With a smile he approached them, for Justice Brower's ardent friendship had never wavered since he had seen how King could run.

Brower, in addition to his many other activities, was the sharpest cattle trader in Pembroke. "Brower's got some cattleman on the string," Ran surmised; but in this he was manifestly mistaken, for, as soon as Brower caught sight of him, he exclaimed:

"Why, *there's* Mistuh Botetourt now!"

"Thank you, sir," said the stranger, just touching the brim of his hat with two fingers. Then, stepping toward Ran: "You are Mr. Botetourt?"

"Yes, sir. What can I do for you?"

"My name's Sims. I am a stranger in Marytown, and I stepped into the bank half an hour ago to ask what planters hereabouts might be interested in a cattle proposition. Your name was the first one mentioned. If you will just come down to the freight yards with me, I'd like you to take a look at what I've got, and see if they won't interest you."

"All right," Ran assented. "I've got a lot of good sod land, and cattle always interest me. Did you want to pasture them out for the summer?"

"No, I want to sell them—and I want to sell them to-day. I've got two hundred half-bred Aberdeen Angus steers, coming two years old—and as pretty and even a lot of steers as you ever saw."

"Two hundred! That's more than I have capital to handle."

"They're a bargain for somebody. Might as well have a look at them, anyway."

Sleek and black and all of the same size, they were indeed a sight to make a cattleman's mouth water.

"Last week I was out in Chicago, the day cattle touched the lowest price in seventeen years. But you can't scare me with low prices—not when I want to *buy*."

"Why do you want to sell them?" Ran asked.

"I didn't until yesterday afternoon. I was taking them to my place in Fauquier, but yesterday I received this." He dug into his breast pocket, and unfolded a yellow telegraph form, which he passed over to Botetourt.

Sold place for twenty thousand.

MARY.

"I've been trying to sell my place for nigh two years, and had about decided to hold onto it. But Mary—that's my wife—is always after me to go back to Texas, where her folks live, and I promised her I'd go as soon as I could sell. But now that leaves me with these two hundred head of cattle on my hands and nowhere to put 'em."

He thrust out his under lip meditatively, took off his hat, and wiped his forehead.

"As soon as I got that telegram from my wife, I wired all over the lot to stop

my cattle, and finally caught 'em here. If you don't want 'em, perhaps you know of some one else who does. I tell you what I'll do: if you can get me the cash to-day, I'll let you have the lot, freight paid, for——"

With the stub of a pencil he scribbled a figure on the back of his wife's telegram—and the figure on the bit of yellow paper took Ran's breath away.

"What do you say to that?" the stranger asked. "It's less than I paid in Chicago, without counting the freight or the feed on the way. But I'm going to get shut of them to-day, somehow."

"I suppose there's no tick or anything the matter with them?" Ran asked absently, his mind searching for some way to raise this money. If he only had the capital, what an opportunity this was! Then Hurley Krafft's offer to lend him five thousand dollars flashed into his mind. That would be enough to pay for these cattle, and leave plenty to take Kings Grant up to the Northern tracks in the spring.

"You can bring a vet down to examine them, and if they ain't perfectly sound I'll make you a present of them," the man was saying.

"Will you excuse me just a minute? Possibly I may manage to take them, after all."

Ran went into the freight office, borrowed a pen and paper, and wrote:

Can you still let me have that five thousand dollars? If so, I should like to get it this morning, as I have an important deal on hand for which I should need the cash at once?

He sealed the envelope and addressed it to Hurley Krafft, and sent a small negro boy scurrying off with it, with the promise of a quarter if he brought back an answer within twenty minutes.

What marvelous luck that the stranger had passed safely through Brower's hands to him! Brower would have jumped at his offer in an instant—and he had the capital to do it. Until the bargain was completed, he must at all hazards keep Sims away from the cattle traders swarming Marytown on a court day. Ran hurried out of the freight office, fearing lest the stranger might have escaped even in these few minutes.

"I have sent off a messenger," Botetourt explained. "I believe I shall be able to buy them, after all."

"That's the talk! You might as well have 'em as any one else. All I want is my money."

The minutes dragged slowly along. Fortunately the stranger showed no sign of restlessness. For all his impatience to sell, he was a very patient man.

A breathless darky came sloshing through the mud, an envelope in his hand. Nervously Ran opened the note.

DEAR MR. BOTETOURT: I am going at once to deposit the five thousand dollars to your credit at the bank, so that you can draw against it right away.

Come around and sign the papers any time to-day. Your obedient servant,

HURLEY KRAFFT.

"Is I done took twenty minutes?" the little darky gasped.

Ran fished half a dollar from his pocket and handed it to the boy, who sneaked off without a word, lest he awaken before he have a chance to spend it.

After the transaction was completed—the vet had given the steers a clean bill of health—the bill of sale was signed, the bill of lading made over to Ran, his check to Sims certified by the bank, and the two men had shaken hands heartily and parted, Ran waited to say a few words to the cashier:

"I certainly am obliged to you, Mr. Benson, for having put this man Sims on my track this morning. It'll mean a good many dollars to me by next fall—unless cattle go still lower."

"Me? I didn't tell him about you. I never set eyes on him until you brought him into the bank yourself."

"Somebody here must have."

"Barty!" Benson called out to the teller. "Was that man Sims in here earlier this morning, asking about cattlemen.

"No, sir."

"Well, that's funny," Ran said, puzzled. "He certainly told me he was."

"It must have been somebody else. I always notice strangers that come in here—specially court days—and I'm sure he wasn't in the bank this morning."

CHAPTER XIII.

A NIGHT AND A DAWN.

Since the cattle deal had now been happily consummated, the question of who had mentioned Botetourt's name to Sims seemed of little importance, and Ran dismissed it from his mind. The problem immediately before him was to get his steers out to Kings Grant, a problem complicated by court day. The usually lonely road would this afternoon be crowded with people returning home, a fair portion of them not unexhilarated by liquor. 'Twas before the "dry fellers" had even clipped their shells in Virginia.

Ran did not care to risk trampling any one under the eight hundred hoofs of his Aberdeen Angus steers. On the other hand, he did not wish the steers to remain in their present cramped quarters an hour longer than was necessary. As he was deciding on a plan of action, Arthur came sauntering by.

"Going to have any luncheon to-day?" the latter inquired. "It's half past two already."

"Yes, let's go over to the Planters Hotel now. And, by the way, Arthur, I've got a job for you."

"What is it?"

"I'm going to drive a lot of steers out home to-night. Will you help?"

"Well, I guess! But why do you go at night?"

"Got to wait till all is quiet along the Potomac. I wouldn't have a lot of young and innocent Aberdeen Angus steers mixed up with the usual bunch of returning revelers on court day, for money. We shan't get started much before midnight."

"Lucky I came into town to-day, or I'd have missed this."

"Reckon you'll have your fill of cattle herding to-night, and you may find it more exciting than fox hunting."

Settled at a small table in the hotel, Ran propounded a conundrum: "If it takes two men and a boy to drive a cow and a week-old calf from Kings Grant to Marytown, how many men will it take to drive two hundred steers from Marytown to Kings Grant?"

Arthur looked blank.

Ran laughed. "The answer is: as many as you can get. There won't be enough, but that will make it all the more exciting. Raish is in town with the four-horse team and two of the hands. I'll mount them on the horses, and leave the wagon in here. Then I'll pick up two or three boys around town, and, with your valued assistance, we'll make out."

During the afternoon the spring left even the sky, and a cold, clear night followed upon March court day. At the freight yards there was the usual delay in shunting the cars to the chute where the cattle could descend. Finally, with the help of great shouting, whip cracking and lantern waving, they were out, and started in the right direction. There followed a long time of steady plodding, during which the countryside seemed gradually to get lighter, as the eyes accustomed themselves to the dark. The steam rising from the cattle could plainly be seen in the clear starlight, like a light mist over the herd. At every gate and lane and crossroad, two of the negroes on foot had to skirt through the fields to get ahead of the cattle and prevent their

turning off the main road. Gradually the mud became harder, in the frosty night, till it was rough rock underfoot and the hoofs rang sharply on it. At every "branch" there was the tinkling of breaking ice, and more bellowing and pushing as some of the cattle wished to stop to drink while others pushed forward. Then again followed the regular thudding of eight hundred unshod hoofs on the hard ground.

Two miles from Kings Grant, the road passed through a sort of common of poor land, which had never been fenced. As the steers saw the fences disappear from both sides of them, they thought they had come to the promised land, and started joyfully to spread out among the underbrush. And here, as Ran had promised, Arthur had a chance for hard galloping as in the most thrilling hunt. Ran himself rode like a spirit of the night, lose-reined and reckless, amid the bushes and over little ravines, yelling and waving his hat, heading off the steers and turning them back to the road.

Fortunately there is implanted in the bovine head the instinct to follow a path; and presently they were all back on the road. Then the fences closed in on them and they came to the long, slow pull up the hill to Kings Grant gate. Here for a few minutes there was a regular Brooklyn Bridge crush. Bellowing, the steers tried to leap over or burrow under each other. The solid locust gateposts cracked with the strain, and the situation was really dangerous, till Ran shouted to Raish to pull down a couple of panels of the fencing. Through the gap thus formed the tidal wave of steers broke, and in three minutes became indistinguishable from the bushes and little trees dotting the pasture. Only their lowing sounded through the still air to remind their herders that they had not just emerged from a nightmare of steaming black hornless bodies and thudding hoofs.

"Well, boys, build up the fence again, and then come up to the brick kitchen and get your money. I'll ride ahead and see that Link gets you the best breakfast the plantation affords."

Botetourt and Arthur galloped up the lane to the house. It was nearly morning, although the blackness of the night had only begun to lessen. They rode to the quarter where Link slept.

"Oh, Link!" shouted Ran, and tapped on the window with his whip. At the second summons a muffled "Comin'!" showed that Link was awakened.

They waited till he came to the door. "Never mind about the horses; we'll put them up. You hustle around to the kitchen and start your fire, and get breakfast for seven of the hungriest darkies you ever saw. Get a *good* breakfast."

"Well, *suh!*" Link exclaimed. "Sounds like thrashin'." In a minute Link was fully waked up and eager to dispense the hospitalities of his kitchen. "All right, s'r. You trus' me," he said joyfully.

During the wait for breakfast, Arthur found his eyelids suddenly becoming leaden, and a great weariness weighing down his limbs. While drinking his coffee he had to apologize for several portentous yawns he could not stifle.

"Look here, old man, you'd better turn in," the Virginian said, laughing. "You've certainly earned a few hours' rest."

"If you don't mind, I believe I will," Arthur replied, and made for bed.

As for Botetourt, although his dark face was a trifle leaner from the night's work, he looked, as he felt, exhilarated beyond the need of sleep. He became aware, however, that the night's wild riding over the common had left its mark on his clothes, and went to his room to change them. A cold bath and clean clothes invigorated him still fur-

ther, and incapable of supporting inactivity in his present state of mind, he went down to the old stone quarter where King had his habitation, saddled him, and started out for a ride over the plantation.

It was now day, and, in spite of the bare, leafless trees, in spite of the winter-brown sod fields, in spite of the frozen ground underfoot, it was spring. There was spring in the cheerful cackle of the hens, in the flutelike voices of the birds, in the playful capers of his colt, in the touch of mildness in the air —and, more than all else, there was spring in the heart of Randolph Botetourt.

Everywhere that he rode about the wide-spreading pastures, he came upon groups of steers, from two to three to a dozen or more. Already they were quite at home, nibbling at the buds of trees and underbrush, or industriously extracting some sustenance from the barren-looking sod.

After more than an hour of this soul-satisfying viewing of his possessions, Ran turned in the general direction of the house, with a detour by way of the race track. It was situated on that side of his plantation next to Red Oak, and it is possible this may have influenced his direction more than the desire to ascertain the condition of the track. Once or twice he had chanced to meet Clarissa Maitland on an early-morning ride; and, though he told himself, with stern common sense, that there was no probability of meeting her to-day, yet it seemed only fitting that on this morning of all mornings, when he came in sight of the boundary fence, he should see her.

Her horse was standing motionless on a little hill, his neck in a fine curve, his nose outstretched, and his ears pricked forward to the ring of King's steel-shod hoofs on the ground. Horse and girl were silhouetted against the clear northern sky. Her figure looked like the elusive spirit of spring, poised for flight. The brown colt whinneyed a salute, and in a minute Ran was at her side.

"You're just what I need to make the morning perfect," he said.

"I had found it a pretty good morning without anybody." Yet her hazel eyes belied her words as she held out her gauntleted hand.

"If that is a snub, it never touched me. Come with me, and I'll show you a sight for sore eyes."

They rode over into his big pasture, and he showed her his cattle, and told her the story of their buying.

"I owe a great deal to your father," he went on. "He made me realize that a man ought to try to get ahead in the world."

"Yes, I suppose so," she assented, with a little sigh that one should have to think of such a thing in Virginia. "It was a wonderful chance—getting them so cheap."

"I believe the world is full of chances to make money," he answered confidently. "I hope to win some big purses with Kings Grant this summer; and if I sell these cattle at a profit of only fifteen dollars a head, there will be three thousand dollars."

In spite of his confidence, Clarissa was vaguely disquieted. "If you couldn't sell them, or if anything should happen to them, you would still owe Mr. Krafft the money," she said thoughtfully.

"Nothing *can* happen to them," he declared buoyantly. "They're as safe as if I already had the money in the bank." And he went on to talk of his plans while she listened, as if they concerned far more romantic matters than fattening steers. After all, romance is in the state of mind, not in the circumstance. What would *you* not give to be riding in their saddles and talking of fattening steers?

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

It was morning of a deceitful day, this on which Ran and Clarissa cast approving eyes upon the young Aberdeen Anguses. It did not presage the coming of spring. One perfect day gladdened; then cold, sloppy, windy, wintry weather filled the rest of the month.

With April, sudden summer arrived overnight, and the work of the plantation, already favored by the open winter, had to be pushed forward still faster, in order that there should be as little need for Ran's oversight as possible when he should go away to try King's fortune on the gold-paved tracks of the North.

No less important than the farm work was the conditioning of the brown. The winter had filled him out. His splendid sloping shoulders seemed capable of carrying any weight. His deep chest provided lung capacity for a race of any distance. His quarters, a trifle drooping, but beautifully formed, promised great propelling power.

Of Jenkins, Botetourt saw a good deal at the track. He had innocently supposed he should be able to pick up some valuable pointers from him during the spring training. But Jenkins was a man of mystery. Habitually he wore a knowing, foxy look. The less he knew, the more knowing he looked. The more he knew, the foxier grew his expression, the more repellent his manner.

It is difficult to judge the speed of a horse when galloping alone; and one morning Botetourt asked Jenkins to let a horse of Mr. Maitland's run a trial half with him.

"My horses have all galloped this morning," Jenkins replied briefly. At another time Hawaiian Prince had a cold. The pretense that the horse was an old crock whom Mr. Maitland only kept alive for sentimental reasons had gradually been dropped.

Botetourt shortly became aware that Jenkins did not regard him in the light of a protégé. Thereafter he troubled Jenkins no further, and simply trained King according to his own best lights.

Two days before King was to be shipped, Link came to his master with an aggrieved air. "Marse Ran, when you go up No'th to them racin' tracks, is you gwine take me with you?"

"Why, Link, I've got to have an expert horseman to take care of the brown."

"Don't I keep you-all's ridin' hawses good?" Link inquired, somewhat miffed.

"You make them look well, but I've got to have a man who knows how to *condition* a horse for racing. That's a different proposition from giving a lick and a promise to a ridin' nag. Besides," he added, as he noticed Link's disappointment, "I want you to stay here and make me a good gyarden, and keep the house clean and cut me up a lot of wood for next winter and feed the hounds and set half a dozen hens and put me up some preserves and a lot of other things."

Link's face did not lighten at his master's friendly tone. "Seems like a big plantation like this oughtn't to be lef' without no white man on it," he muttered as he went out of the room.

The old servitor went about his work with unusual glumness the next day. His master paid no attention to this; Link was too faithful not to be permitted his little moods in peace.

"I shan't be home to supper to-night," Ran said on the afternoon of his last day in Virginia. "Have my horse saddled for me about five o'clock."

"Is you gwine be out late?" Link asked, anxiety showing through his pretense of casualness.

"Not very—why?"

"Oh, nuthin'. I jus' inquire'."

Ran was taking supper and spending this last evening at Red Oak, and

Clarissa, Arthur, and he were full of his coming venture on the great track, where the fortunes that some men lost were lying around for others to pick up.

It was late when Ran went out to the horse rack and swung himself into the saddle.

"Evenin', Marse Ran," said a familiar voice. "I been visitin' over heah, too." Link laid a hand on the mane of the horse, and stepped briskly alongside him. It was plain that he did not wish to be left behind, so Ran rode at a walk. "You is goin' away to-morrow foh sure?" Link presently inquired.

"Yes, we'll see King safely into his box car, and then I'll take the noon train."

"It'll be right lonesome heah without you, Marse Ran."

"Oh, I'll be back, off and on," Ran answered, touched.

When he dismounted at the house, Link said: "I'll just turn yo' haws out in the house yard, 'n' put the saddle and bridle in the kitchen, where there can't no calf chew 'em. 'Tain't wuth while goin' down to the stable to-night —an' the grass *need* somethin' to eat it down."

"All right," Ran agreed. "Good night."

"Good night, Marse Ran."

About three o'clock in the morning Botetourt awoke feeling thirsty. He paddled over to the washstand in his bare feet, but found the pitcher empty. "Confound Link!" he muttered. The nearest water was in the cedar bucket in the back hall. He opened the door of his room, and stumbled over somebody lying on the rug outside his door.

He was about to bring the water pitcher upon the intruder's head, when the latter flopped up on his knees and began to pray violently:

"O Lawd! Save me! Save me, O Lawd! I ain' done nuthin'——"

"Link, you fool! What are you doing here?" Ran cried sharply.

It took Link several seconds to come out of his ecstasy of fear.

"I—I—thought you—was—the—the —ha'nt," he stammered at length. "You was—all white—like him."

"What ha'nt?" Ran demanded angrily, for a ghost is very unprofitable live stock to have upon a place where one must rely on negro labor.

"I hope to die, Marse Ran," Link replied earnestly, "but they's a ha'nt upon this plantation."

"Nonsense! What have you seen—a sheet hanging out on a clothesline?"

"Doan you think I know a sheet from a *ha'nt?*" Link protested, hurt. "I done seen it twiced—and it warn't nowhere near no clothesline. That's why I come up here and slep' outside your do'. I wasn't goin' to be out in my quarter alone, with that ha'nt ripsnortin' all over the place."

"Why didn't you take the hounds into your cabin? Then no ha'nt would have come near you," Ran declared, speaking like one who was an authority on ha'nts, their manners, and customs.

"Tha's the worst of it," Link replied in an awe-struck tone. "Night befoh las' I was down in the fiel' beyon' the spring house, with that little tan houn' bitch, when we seed the ha'nt—an' she put her tail between her laigs and ran back to th' house *faster than I did myself!*"

"Has Raish seen him?"

"No, s'r. An' he *say* he don't believe in ha'nts. But you wait twell he see him."

"H'm!" No humorous side to the situation struck Ran. "Well, you lie down here on the rug again and go to sleep. No ha'nt is coming in *here,* at any rate."

"No, s'r. I felt perf'kly safe here —twell you done come out in your nightgown."

Ran went back to bed, forgetting all about his thirst, and presently went to sleep. In the morning he undertook to sift the matter of this recent arrival at Kings Grant to the bottom. He found Raish quiet and unsensational about it, though not so skeptical on the subject of ghosts as Link had represented him.

"Yes, s'r, I've been told there weren't no such things as ha'nts," he agreed politely, "but Link ain't the only one that's seen him. Two of the teamsters saw him—and they was together!"

It was a most unfortunate circumstance that Ran had to go away leaving so formidable an object as the ghost behind him. The latter might stampede his whole force of farm hands while he was away.

In the train going north Ran's misgivings gradually lessened. The hopes for his horse drove everything else from his mind, and his ghostly troubles had become faint by the time he alighted at Bentico. The first man he saw on arriving was a tall, lanky man with greenish eyes and sandy hair.

"Hello, my young millionaire friend," Meetler said in his usual lackluster manner. "So you've come on up here with your nag to ruin all us poor bookies."

Ran grinned. The high hopes in his breast made him feel friendly toward all the world.

"I reckon so," he replied jovially.

"Well, don't be too hard on us," drawled Meetler. "See you later—on the track."

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE GOLD-PAVED TRACKS

It was a month after this, and the day of the great Chevy Chase Handicap. In the interval King had raced seven times, and had won seven races. The game seemed too easy to Ran; he felt sorry for the bookmakers.

The horses were already on the track, King dancing and prancing—not viciously and nervously, as some of them were, but in sheer superabundance of spirits—and evoking "Ah's!" of admiration from the crowd. His jockey, Mortimer, was concentrating his mind on the horse and paying not the slightest attention to the cries exhorting him to win.

Botetourt surveyed the horses and the jockeys and the crowd, aud tried to squeeze the exultant glint of pride from his eyes. Strolling along in front of the grand stand, he received a good deal more notice than did a visiting German prince, who, in the interests of the peace of the world, was conscientiously viewing our institutions, eating our banquets, and swapping compliments with our after-dinner speakers.

An acquaintance rushed up to Ran. "King can't lose, can he?" he asked breathlessly.

"Any horse can lose anything, I reckon," the Virginian philosophized, though in his heart he did not believe it.

"Then you wouldn't advise me to put forty plunks on, at four to three?" the man asked, disappointed at not being urged to follow his desires.

"My dear sir, I advise you never to bet," with which pious exhortation the Virginian went on his way.

Many others sought from Botetourt foreknowledge of the outcome of the principal race of the day, and all received the same sound advice not to risk their money on the legs and wind of any horse. But after receiving it most of them rushed off to the betting ring and did not follow it, and the odds rose still more prohibitively.

Money came more easily to the young Virginian at this time than he had ever imagined it possible that money could come to any one. If it went equally easily—if high-priced jockeys and innumerable other expenses somehow absorbed a great deal of what he won—

still there was always the feeling of money in the air. It was all about. Every one seemed to have pockets full of it, for at this time horse-racing was in the flourishing condition known as "with the lid off."

The Chevy Chase Handicap was the most important race King had yet been entered in, and Botetourt felt so confident of the result that he had bet pretty much all the money he could lay his hands on that his horse would win. It required more money to win a respectable amount when one's horse was an odds on favorite than when he was a long shot.

They were off! King, beautiful enough of his lean kind to win the heart of any man, bounded away in the lead, and quickly opened up a gap of forty yards between himself and the next horse.

"What in blazes is Mortimer doing?" exclaimed Ran angrily. "I told him to lay behind till the last quarter." But the crowd yelled at sight of their choice forging to the front in this irresistible manner.

"He'll spread-eagle the field!" shouted one man. "There isn't another horse on the track except Kings Grant!"

"There's no need of winning by a mile, and encouraging the handicapper to pile weight on him," Ran muttered. But he might have saved himself his fears. On the back stretch it became evident there was a disagreement between jockey and horse. The latter was fighting for his head. He swerved to the outside of the track, and the other horses crept up on him.

The crowd grew quiet and tense with anxiety.

At the turn, the field was even with King, between him and the pole, and he was forced still farther toward the outside of the track.

In the straight, Caryatid and Lucerne had a lead of a couple of lengths on King, and the grand stand was groaning. But here Mortimer showed his class and brought his horse along with a regular Garrison rush, amid a storm of howls from the frantic public.

It was almost a Garrison finish, but not quite. The effort had been delayed just a fraction of a second too long, and King finished third, a nose behind Lucerne and not a half a length behind Caryatid.

The jockey's assertion that King had tried to bolt with him at the start, and then had tried to fly the track on the back stretch, was generally accepted as true, and, with his magnificent ride to the wire, the public felt that it had at least had a run for its money. But Botetourt knew that with ordinary good riding his horse ought to have won. His interview with Mortimer was short, and after listening to the latter's too profuse and plausible explanations, he ended it, lest in anger he strike the diminutive jockey.

The day after the race Ran was watching his negro groom rubbing down King outside his box stall, when a voice at his shoulder drawled out:

"Hard luck to lose the Chevy Chase yesterday."

Ran turned, and saw the tall, lean Meetler. Far from harboring a grudge against the Virginian for turning down the horse-racing proposition he once had made him, he had regarded the young man's arrival at Bentico with a humorously indulgent, if slightly cannibalistic, eye. During the last month Meetler had paid out considerable money to Botetourt after each of King's wins, and paid it so cheerfully that Ran could not draw a long face before him now. He could not, however, help saying bitterly:

"There was not the slightest need of King's losing yesterday."

"Seems like he might have won," the bookmaker agreed sympathetically.

"Mortimer is either a crook—or he

ought to be sweeping out stables instead of trying to ride. He'll never mount my horse again; that's one sure thing."

"Never's a long word," Meetler observed.

There was a pause, during which nothing was heard except the sibilant sounds of the groom as he rubbed the horse and the scraping of the brush over the currycomb at the end of each stroke.

Suddenly Meetler looked straight at Botetourt and demanded:

"Why don't you come in out of the wet?"

"What do you mean?"

"A smart young chap like you hasn't been at Bentico for a month without discovering that most of us race-horse men ain't here because it's a healthy outdoor occupation for persons with weak lungs. We're all in it for what we get out of it, and," he added, with a droop of his left eyelid, "and to improve the breed of horses. I told you once before that your pony could be made useful. It's easy enough to *pull* a horse, but to get hold of one that can *win* when we want him to is a lot harder. King can win—win against the best of them. You know that as well as I do." The drawling voice fell soothingly on Ran's inattentive ears. "Barring millionaires, like your United Hardware friend, the whole racing game is a dead open-and-shut affair. The public pays for it, of course—and why shouldn't they? It doesn't hurt 'em, and if they didn't spend their money this way they'd spend it some other." With his saturnine smile, he added: "Of course, they're bound to lose. Too much of the public's money is a worse handicap to a horse than lead in his saddle flaps—as King found out yesterday. Well, will you come in with us, help us skin the public and draw your little percentages—like you was cutting coupons?" he ended, with cynical frankness.

For an instant the moody eyes of the Virginian, fixed upon his horse, flared with an angry light. Then he laughed. What was the use of getting angry?

More eagerly Meetler proceeded:

"That ain't the only way you can be useful to us. You're well acquainted with Mr. Maitland, and you can get to know his millionaire friends in a way that neither I nor any of the other bookies can. You'll be able to get some valuable information about how their horses are running, which will help us a heap in making up our books. Just keep on pretending to run your horse on your own account—and the less you're seen with us the more it will be worth to you when we settle up."

Botetourt turned slowly toward Meetler.

"In other words, you want me to sell my friendship—for money?" he asked in level tones.

"You ketch my idee exactly," replied the bookmaker brazenly.

The Virginian took a deliberate step toward Meetler, and struck him a blow full on the mouth which sent the tall bookmaker sprawling to the ground.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGGER IN THE WOODPILE.

The bookmaker slowly picked himself up without showing any signs of wishing to continue the battle. He was not lacking in courage, nor in any way disposed to turn the other cheek, but he had other means of revenging himself.

"Golly! You cert'nly done give him a good one!" cried the negro hostler, suspending his grooming.

The elation produced by his encounter with Meetler stayed with Ran for several hours, though he fully recognized that his troubles had not been lessened by his act. To add to his misgivings he received a letter from Raish in the afternoon telling him that

five of his steers had been found dead in the pasture. Raish thought they must have eaten laurel, and was going to take the hands and cut down all that the cattle could get at.

During the next few weeks Ran had little time to think of anything except King and his racing. The pickings became slim. Always the brown seemed to have hard luck; he was pocketed or crowded and thrown out of his stride at the turn. Once he was left at the post; another time he was so loggy and out of condition that Ran feared he had been doped. And on one occasion he was so palpably pulled that the stewards suspended his jockey, and warned his owner, in spite of Botetourt's wrathful disclaimers.

Now and then the brown was permitted to win some unimportant race in hollow style—merely to tantalize Botetourt and to induce the public to continue backing their erstwhile favorite.

About three weeks later there was a race Ran felt quite confident of winning. The weights were favorable, and he had secured from a friend of Mr. Maitland's the services of a capable jockey who would hardly let himself be pocketed and whose reputation for incorruptibility had earned him the sobriquet of "Honest Johnny."

Ran slept little the night before this race. He had lost the placid condition habitual to him in Virginia, and was all nerves. At daybreak he went down to see how King had fared. The negro hostler, who slept in the box stall, was not there, and Ran discovered to his dismay that the horse did not have his muzzle on and had eaten up a large part of his bedding.

A suspicion Ran had entertained once or twice before came back to him again with the conviction of certainty, and he withdrew quietly from the stall. Later he returned, found fresh straw in the stall, the muzzle on King, and the negro just preparing to take it off and give the horse his breakfast.

"Think we can win to-day?" Ran asked.

"He's in mighty good shape," the groom replied heartily.

"Didn't get at his bedding in the night, did he?" Ran inquired casually.

"Naw, sah! I just taken his muzzle off this minute to feed him."

The Virginian said nothing. The negro was only a tool. He shivered when he thought of the money he had intended betting on this race.

At once he decided to run down to Virginia and put into action a plan he had been thinking of for some time. He did not worry over the result of to-day's race. He knew well enough what it would be.

The same morning there arrived a second letter from Raish telling him of the death of seven more steers. This news was more disquieting than the discovery about his hostler. Ran had counted on the steers as on an absolute certainty. Racing, even in his most confident moments, he knew to be a gamble. He wired Raish to meet him at the three a. m. train, and to ask the vet to come out to Kings Grant the same morning.

How good it was, in the early summer morning, to get out of the sleeper at Marytown. Raish and Link were there with the dayton and pair. They had had to get up in the middle of the night to meet the train.

"We both done come," Link announced superfluously.

"You ain't lookin' ve'y well, Marse Ran," pronounced Raish critically. "Better *had* come back home. 'Tain' no manner o' way to live, gallivantin' 'roun' them tracks."

"By Jove, you're right, Raish. Just let me win one or two fat races up there and I'll come back fast enough."

"I done heerd tell King had won a many race already."

"Y-e-s, he had pretty good luck at first. We haven't done as well lately."

"Sho! That's too bad. King, he probably am homesick for F'ginia, jus' like you is."

"He seems all right, but there are a lot of crooks on the track, and they don't like me, and they make it pretty hard for King to win. Seen anything of Mr. Ha'nt lately?" Ran was so glad to get back to Pembroke that he even felt an affection for the ha'nt—a good Virginia ha'nt.

Raish's face lost the broad smile that had adorned it since he had caught sight of his master.

"Yas'r, we seen him pretty often—an' ten mo' steers died last night."

"*Ten!* For God's sake, Raish, what can be the matter with them?"

"I dunno, Marse Ran. It 'pears like the place am hoodooed."

"Ten more!" Ran repeated. "That makes twenty-two altogether?"

"It do," Raish replied gloomily.

They drove in silence for half a mile.

"Did you ask the vet to come out to Kings Grant to-day?"

"He comin' out d'reckly after breakfas'."

It was noon. The vet had finished his dissection of the dead cattle; his inspection of the living.

"Some one's poisoning your cattle, Ran." He gave his decision in a troubled voice.

"Who in thunder would want to poison my cattle?" Ran demanded in exasperated perplexity.

"All the rest of your cattle are perfectly well, and there's nothing growing in the pastures here that ain't growing in eve'y pasture in Pembroke."

"I haven't an enemy I know of to amount to anything—not in Virginia, that is. Couldn't it be some newfangled disease, doc, something we haven't had down here before? That may be the reason Sims was so anxious to sell them to me March court day."

"I tell you those steers were *sound* when I examined them March court day. I remember 'em especially. Besides, you had 'em under your eyes a couple of months before you went No'th. Did you see any signs of a newfangled 'sease all that time?"

"No, I didn't," Ran admitted.

"Then don't talk to me about newfangled 'seases. The old ones are good enough to kill Pembroke cattle yet a while," the vet declared, stanchly loyal to the old diseases.

"Well, let's wash up and go in to luncheon," Ran said. "Can't help the cattle any to starve ourselves."

During the meal he broached the other cause that had brought him back to Virginia.

"You know old man Peel and his family pretty well, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes, knew him all my life."

"I asked you because they've got the deadwood on me up North. I made enemies of a ring of bookmakers who pretty much run the racing at some of the tracks. A lot of jockeys stand in with 'em, and yesterday morning I discovered that even my groom wasn't to be depended on. I'm going to fire him and take Link up with me to look after the horse. He isn't much of a conditioner—I'll have to attend to that—but they'll catch a Tartar if they try to play any tricks on the horse while he's around. What I need now is a jockey that's honest, and I thought of old man Peel's youngest son, Bob."

The vet pursed up his lips dubiously. "The boy'd be wild to go, but the old man don't believe much in haws-racin'. He's Methody, you know."

"That's too bad. But you think Bob would be perfectly straight, if I could get him?"

"Straight's a string. You needn't worry 'bout that."

"Well, I'll have to see what I can do with the old man."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BATTLE WITH THE BOOKMAKERS.

After the vet had gone Ran told Link to saddle a horse for him. "Needn't get supper for me to-night," he said. "I'm going out to old man Peel's, and shall stop in at Red Oak on the way back, so I don't expect I'll be home till about nine."

"Nine! That's mighty early to get home from calicoin'," Link observed, with a broad smile.

"It is, for a fact," his master admitted, "but I've got something to do to-night, and will have to get back for it."

Ran found the task of persuading old man Peel to let Bob go North unexpectedly easy. Upon the recital of Ran's troubles, Peel became fired with missionary zeal to combat the ring of iniquitous bookmakers who were leagued against a Virginia gentleman.

"I was in the regiment your father commanded till he was shot," Peel announced proudly, "and Bob'll help you to get the better of them scoun'rels."

Ran's heart was very light as he rode back. All day he had been attending sternly to business. Now he loosened the reins on his horse's neck and clapped heels to his horse's sides, and the rataplan of his horse's hoofs on the sun-baked clay rang out over the countryside in a triumphant peal. He exulted in the swift motion and in the knowledge of what had drawn him back to Virginia more than poisoned steers or the search for a jockey. All day the sordid world had gradually been losing its dull drabness and becoming tinted with the hue of roses as the hour approached nearer when he should see Clarissa. And now that he was actually galloping up to her house, happiness enveloped him—happiness, which all men are seeking in their different ways, happiness which is so evanescent a breath can destroy it, or less than a breath create it full grown.

King's swiftest run could not have carried Ran fast enough up the lane, and at last Clarissa stood before him poised like some wood nymph who even yet might vanish from sight.

Her hazel eyes, with the latent imp of mischief always in them, searched the large drawing-room for him. Her hair clustered around her forehead in loving little tendrils. Her right hand was already extended toward him, her graceful figure—— But of what use is the cataloguing of face or figure? Is not one girl very like another to the philosopher?

Randolph Botetourt was no philosopher. Eagerly he came to her, and both her hands were in his, and the red fluttered into her cheeks at the look in his eyes. He did not speak at first—just looked, as if he could not look enough.

"I did not expect you," she said.

"No. I came—there are various things I came for—officially."

Somehow she regained possession of her hands—he let them go as if he were lending her something that belonged to him. "Your cattle——"

He brushed them aside. "Official—quite official."

"And when are you going back?"

"In the hundredth part of a second."

"What do you mean? Aren't you going to stay to supper?"

"I am going to stay to supper, yet the time will be gone in less than the hundredth part of a second. Don't let's think about it."

"Oh!" A slight confusion tinged her cheeks. "I am so sorry Arthur isn't here. He will be disappointed.

He is"—she smiled a dimpling smile—"he is over calling on Lancelot. He has discovered a way of riding across the mountain which cuts off two miles. He considers it the cleverest achievement of his life."

"Arthur is assimilating the Virginia idea."

"He certainly is. He thinks of nothing now except being a planter—raising thoroughbred horses, pure-bred Poland-China hogs, pure-bred Plymouth Rock chickens——"

"He won't allow anything except pure-bred sparrows to chirp in the hedgerows, I reckon."

Clarissa laughed. "Well, he is spending a good deal of his time with a thoroughbred little lady. Lance is one, if I ever saw one."

"She certainly is," Ran agreed.

"But now tell me how you and King are getting along up North."

"I haven't set the world on fire yet," he replied, with a rueful smile. "It isn't King's fault, though. It's just circumstances," and with the encouragement of the faith in her eyes Ran was soon telling her of all his past troubles and future hopes, as he had done on that early morning of last March, which seemed ages ago.

As he had prophesied, the evening flew by with magical swiftness. At nine o'clock he rose and held out his hand in farewell.

"Oh, why must you go so soon?" Her hand in his sought to detain him.

"Because a good deal depends on my making a success of the various things I have undertaken. To-night I'm going to patrol the plantation and see if I can discover hide or hair of this precious ha'nt that's been terrorizing my nigras so long."

"Must you do it? Won't it be dangerous? Shan't you take some one with you?"

"I'd hate to risk my authority by asking any of my darkies to go with me, and there won't be any danger, except of the han't's receiving a load of buckshot if I get within range of him. If that happens I have an idea my cattle will stop dying off."

So she let him go, and yet the simple saying good-by took Ran another half hour, and the long summer evening had merged into night by the time he reached Kings Grant. Link was waiting with a lantern to take his horse. He was visibly uneasy over something, and Ran good-naturedly asked:

"Well, out with it, Link! What's the matter?"

"N-nuffin, Marse Ran. I—I'd jus' like to axe you a queshun."

"Fire ahead!"

Still Link hesitated. "What I want to axe you," he stammered at length, "is—*is* animals got ha'nts, like folks?"

The unexpectedness of the question staggered Ran.

"H'm!" He assumed a judicial air. "I don't see why an animal couldn't have a ha'nt as well as a man."

"Yas'r, thasso," Link assented. "I hearn tell of a *mule* ha'nt once, but I didn't rightly know ef it war a fac'."

"I've known mules that were mean enough to have ha'nts."

"Thasso." The reasoning impressed Link.

"What made you ask?"

"I—I—I jus' wonderin'. They is some folks say animals don't have no ha'nts, b-but *I* b'lieve like you do." Link glanced fearfully over his shoulder. He approached his master, and lowered his voice.

"Marse Ran, the ha'nt on this place ain't no human ha'nt. It's the ha'nt of a 'raff."

"A what?"

"A 'raff. Ain't you never seen one? He's a kind of a tip-up animal. Behin' he's jus' spindlin' and ornery, but he r'ars up mightily in front. He's got the highes' withers you ever see—an' they ain't *nuthin'* to his neck. I

seen the one at the circus las' summer. Golly! I'd hate to try to halter him when he was loose in the fiel'."

Ran put his hand over his mouth to conceal the smile he could not suppress as he asked:

"But how could the ha'nt of a giraffe get to Virginia?"

"That 'raff done 'ceasted while the circus was here, and they buried him in a gully on the road leadin' out yere. They ought to 'a' *burned* a' animal like that. Jus' buryin' him wa'n't safe enough. 'Bout a week ago that ha'nt done cotch me in a fence corner, and pretty near kill' me. I war down by the spring house at night, and all of a sudden I seen the ha'nt. He wasn't more'n a hundred feet away from me. His moon haid was bobbin' 'long the tops of the trees, a nibblin' here and a nibblin' there, like a haws'll eat the buds of sassafras saplings in spring. Marse Ran, I was so frightened that I couldn't 'a' run if that 'raff had reached down an' et me. But after a while I began to climb sof'ly up the fence corner. He jus' kept on grazing 'long the tops o' the trees—twell one o' them rails broke. Then, *sip!* up went his haid, and he started right toward me. Well, suh, when I saw him a-comin' at *me* I didn't stop foh nuthin'."

"Link, do you want to know what I think about your ha'nt?" Botetourt demanded in a brisk matter-of-fact tone. "I believe some one, who is poisoning my cattle, is taking this way of frightening you boys, so you won't go out and catch him."

"But we *is* been out—and 'twas *him* pretty near catched us. An' then his haid, what shines brighter an' brighter, the darker it gets! Naw, suh! They ain't nobody tryin' to frighten *us*. Raish an' me we wouldn't be frightened of *nobody*—'cept'n a ha'nt."

Ran saw that Link's faith was too deep to be touched by argument.

"Well, bring me my shotgun as soon as you've put away my horses."

"Yo' shotgun!" Link repeated, with dismay.

"Yes, I'm going out to see if I can't discover what this wonderful ha'nt of yours is."

Link went off with the horse, muttering angrily: "Now he gwine spose hisself—all alone."

Ran went into the library, where presently Link brought him his gun, laid it on the table, and without a word went out of the room again. Ran laughed silently at the manner of offended dignity of the old servitor. He examined the gun to make sure it was in working order, loaded it, and slipped half a dozen cartridges into his pocket. Stepping into the hall, he came upon Link seated bolt upright on the old-fashioned black horsehair sofa, his stocky figure tense, his broad black face expressing grim determination, and his hands grasping a huge pair of bellows.

"I's waitin' foh you, suh," Link said doggedly.

Ran was deeply touched. He knew what agonies of fear Link must have conquered in order not to let his master go forth alone in pursuit of the ha'nt.

"That's mighty good of you. But what have you got there?"

"Belluses!" Link replied solemnly. "This ve'y night I remembered something my mammy tole me once when I warn't more'n knee-high to a grasshopper. 'Twarn't no manner o' use, she say, to go after a ha'nt with a' ax, or such, cause his body were jus' like a cold draft of air from an old cellar. She say the onliest thing to do was to try and *blow him out.*"

"Well, between us we ought to manage him all right. Where do you generally see him?" Ran asked, pausing as they stepped out into the night.

"He seem to fin' all the little trees

in the pasture a comf'ble height foh him to graze off'n."

After they were out in the wide spaces of the dark night it appeared to Botetourt a hopeless task to find any single ghost amid so much blackness. They tramped about for hours, and the gun grew heavy on Ran's shoulder. Although every now and then Link's bellows gave an apprehensive wheeze, they saw nothing supernatural.

"We might as well go back," Ran said, when the night was more than half over. "*I* can't find any ha'nts, but if I hadn't been with you I'll bet you'd have seen a dozen by this time."

"Naw, suh!" protested Link, half laughing, half offended. "I don't see nuthin' what ain't there."

With Link and Bobby Peel, Ran returned North the next morning to the racing game, as he had found it to be played. Then the battle with the bookmakers was on, and now that it was more in the open, Ran even felt a certain enjoyment in it. Bobby Peel, if not a natural-born genius of a jockey, proved to be an honest little chap, passionately fond of horses and devoted to Botetourt's interests.

After his first race he came to his employer, his face white. "D'you see that tall, slim jock foul me—the one on the sorrel with the white mane and tail? He kept me from winning. He jostled me twice on the back stretch, and then forced me 'way out on the turn and let all those other horses pass me." Tears of rage were in the boy's eyes.

Botetourt's lean jaw was set grimly. "Yes, I saw it, Bobby. None of the stewards saw it, though, and there's nothing we can do about it. Making a holler won't do us any good."

"I'm not going to make a holler," replied Bobby, choking. He changed his clothes and disappeared.

Two hours later he came into the hotel where Botetourt and he stayed, his nose with the bulbous, ruddy appearance of one which has bled recently, but with a look of bliss upon his face.

"I reckon that tall, slim jockey won't foul me again," he announced, "not in a hurry."

Botetourt glanced at the boy. There was only one experience that could put that light into the boy's eyes.

"Gave him a licking?" he asked sympathetically.

"I did my durndest," Bobby replied modestly.

A week later Link was "approached" by an emissary of Meetler, who, with contempt for professions of honesty in any man, hardly took pains to cover decently with bait the hook he offered the negro.

Immediately thereafter such hostlers and touts as happened to be loafing in that vicinity had the pleasure of observing an infuriated Virginia darky pursuing a smart young Northern mulatto for a quarter of a mile, brandishing a currycomb in one hand and a brush in the other, and daring the fleet young mulatto to stay and fight.

Randolph Botetourt felt not the slightest compunction in employing their own tactics against the bookies. King became so inconsistent a performer that there was no making a safe book upon him. The bookmakers never could tell when pugnacious young Bob Peel would come romping in ahead of the field, or when the horse would gallop in at the tail end of the procession, quite comfortable and unperturbed. The little trick of filling him up with straw could be worked to the disadvantage of others as well as to that of his owner.

Although King's erratic running worried the bookmakers considerably, it profited Ran little. He found the greatest difficulty in getting down bets of any size when he meant King to win. He tried one racing commissioner after

another, enjoining upon each the greatest secrecy. They seemed a wonderful leaky lot, and he did not grow rich at the expense of the bookies.

After puzzling his brains over this phase of the question, Ran one day sent a letter to a certain tout named McGill. It read:

I have some work for you to do, for which I will pay you well. I will tell you what it is if you will meet me at the entrance of the alley opposite Pat Martin's saloon at ten o'clock to-night.

Promptly on the minute McGill appeared at the rendezvous. Ran stepped out of the alley where he was waiting, and beckoned to the tout.

"*You,* Mr. Botetourt," McGill exclaimed. "I didn't know you ever had dealings with the likes of us."

"Yes, I wrote you that letter. I reckon you know the kind of proposition I'm up against with Meetler, Lichtenstein, and all that crowd."

McGill grinned. "Getting too hot for you?" he inquired amiably.

"Not at all. But I need a little help. I sent for you because you have the reputation of being crooked as a ram's horn."

"Well, I guess that's about right," the tout replied. "What c'n I do for you?"

"You can do a great deal for me—and for yourself. The greatest trouble I find now is in getting down any amount of money when my horse is ready to win. They wipe his name off the slate or raise the odds so that I don't make anything even if I pull off the race. If you'll place my bets for me without their finding out I'm betting I'll give you a third of what I make."

"It's a go!" cried McGill.

"Of course you could clear out with my stakes, or sell me out to them if you wanted to——"

"Do you think I'm a fool?" the tout asked, insulted at last. "I'd only make something *once* if I sold you out or cleared out with the stakes. Now how'm I going to communicate with you without nobody catching on to us?"

"There'll be no trouble about that. I know your address, and will write you your directions when I'm ready to bet, inclosing a money-order. Then you can pass by the box stall the day after you've collected, take a look in, and drop an envelope inside with my share of the winnings. It won't happen so often that we'll be suspected, if we both keep our mouths shut."

The bookmakers never suspected the connection between McGill, notorious for his crookedness, and Botetourt, even more objectionable for his honesty, and, betting cautiously, Ran at last began to make money.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CINCHED!

"Well, what's his price to-day?" cried a friendly voice, and a firm hand grasped Ran's arm, where he stood in the door of King's box stall, watching Link rub down the brown.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Maitland?" Ran turned and shook hands with the magnate. "His price? Oh, I haven't thought much about that lately."

"Getting to like the racing game?" Maitland grunted.

"No. I can't say I am. The more I see of it the better pleased I shall be to return to Virginia."

"If that's the way you feel why don't you go about it in the sensible way? I'm offering you twenty thousand dollars cash."

"Twenty thousand is a good bit of money, but if I keep him I'll probably make that before the season is over—and have my horse besides." Botetourt spoke jauntily.

Mr. Maitland's offers had been

growing of late, for Jenkins would give him no peace about King.

"Nonsense!" the millionaire now exclaimed impatiently. "This isn't a game for a man without capital. Supposing your horse goes lame, even supposing he only gets stale and track sick—whiff! you're up the spout."

"I'm watching out for his condition pretty sharply," Ran replied.

"Watching out for his condition," repeated the magnate in a pitying tone. "Why, boy, I tell you, you don't know any more about conditioning a horse than a baby. King just trains himself. He wins when he feels like it, and, when he doesn't, he comes home like a plow horse galloping back to the stable for dinner. You ought to be back on your farm shooting rabbits—then King wouldn't be the scandal he is by his inconsistent performances."

Botetourt's temper was gone, but his tone was still icily courteous as he replied:

"Mr. Maitland, racing is not a sport for me now; it is a way of making money—and I believe King is quite as consistent a performer as United Hardware. As to my training abilities, I believe I've learned enough to beat anything in your string, at any distance, and at any time within the next two months. And, what is more, I'll ride King myself."

"You will, eh?" Mr. Maitland glared at him. "Well, I'll bet you twenty thousand dollars, against your horse, that you can't."

"I'll take that bet," Ran cried fiercely, "the horses to carry a hundred and forty pounds, and you to give me two days' notice of time and distance."

"It's a go! Some time in the next two months I'll set the date and distance—with two days' notice. I'll have a memorandum of the conditions typewritten, and send you two copies. You can O. K. one of them and return it to me. Good day."

"Good afternoon!" Ran replied, and neither offered to shake hands with the other.

Mr. Maitland was hardly out of sight before a pang of regret shot through Ran's heart. He felt that in his anger he had betrayed King. The memorandum of the bet arrived promptly. Ran hoped there might be some alterations in the terms which would justify him in refusing to sign it. It was scrupulously exact.

Youth is so slow to learn its own powerlessness in the scheme of things that fate has acquired the habit of sending misfortunes not singly, but in battalions. And now that Ran was bowed down in gloom more was added to it. A telegram came from Raish:

Seventeen more steers dead.

Had this arrived while Ran was still master of his fate and held the bookmakers in the hollow of his hand, it would not have mattered so much. In a lucky month he could have recouped himself for the loss of all the cattle. Now he must hold his horse in reserve, ready at any time to run the hardest race of his career against the pick of Mr. Maitland's stable.

The news of the novel match between Maitland and Botetourt caused considerable interest among the racing fraternity, and not a little malicious satisfaction was expressed by the bookmakers' ring against the young freebooter of the track.

"This is the time the Virginian slipped up," was their verdict. "He loses his horse, and don't even get a run for his money, with Jenkins to pick the time when King is out of condition."

Yet as the season advanced, and the racing changed from one track to another, Jenkins never seemed able to find the proper moment for the match.

A month after Mr. Maitland had

made the match with Ran, he had a heart-to-heart talk with his trainer.

"See here, Jenkins," he said testily, "we haven't forever to win Botetourt's horse. And I don't want him to get twenty thousand dollars of mine through the statute of limitations—while you're asleep at the switch."

Jenkins was used to being treated with more consideration, yet he did not resent Mr. Maitland's manner.

"I know it, sir; but I ain't been asleep all this time, I can tell you. I've lost pounds over this match. You know," he said confidentially, "when King is in form we haven't a horse that can touch him. He's a wonder. If I had him to train——"

"Well, it's your business to get him," Mr. Maitland interrupted. "I know he's a good horse, that's why I want him. But I don't pay you fifteen thousand dollars a year to let a green Virginian catch you napping."

Jenkins reddened under these words.

"Oh, I'm going to *win*, all right," he declared. "But you don't want me to go off half cocked. I've got two touts watching him every minute." He pulled out a greasy little notebook. "Here's what he's done every day, both in public and in private, since you made the match."

The millionaire glanced over the notebook. "I want results, not notebooks," he said roughly.

"I'll deliver the goods when the time comes," Jenkins asserted again, though the confidence that usually marked his declarations was lacking. For half an hour after his employer left him he sat in the stable, a motionless straw between his teeth, staring at the floor and doing the hardest thinking of his life.

At the end of that time a slow grin oozed over his face. He raised his head, and spit out the straw.

"Cinched!" he exclaimed.

That night two of Mr. Maitland's best horses disappeared from his stable.

CHAPTER XIX.

JENKINS GLOATS.

As the end of the agreed two months approached nearer and nearer, Ran's anxiety increased with every hour. He himself was trained down far too fine for health, in his endeavor to reduce himself to the prescribed weight.

Only three days remained of the two months, when Jenkins came sauntering up to King's box stall one afternoon. At the sight of him Ran divined that the time had been set, and he breathed a long sigh of relief.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Botetourt. I have a letter here for you from Mr. Maitland, setting the conditions of our little race."

Under his breath Ran murmured, "Thank God!" for his horse was in perfect condition—ready to run the race of his life.

"Glad you're pleased," Jenkins remarked blandly.

There was a malicious note in the trainer's voice which made Ran vaguely uneasy. "Good morning!" he said, not desirous of prolonging the interview.

Still Jenkins lingered. "You haven't asked what the distance is to be," he observed.

"I presume Mr. Maitland's letter will give me all the information I require," Botetourt answered curtly. "We're ready for a furlong or a mile—two miles, if Mr. Maitland chooses."

"Well, this race is going to be run at four miles."

"Four miles!"

Botetourt was unable to keep his dismay out of his voice. Then he mastered himself before the gloating look in the trainer's eyes.

"Very well. Good morning."

Reluctantly the trainer accepted his dismissal. He would have loved to chaff the Virginian over the way he had outwitted him had he dared. "He's a game one," he muttered to himself

as he walked away; "but we've got him this time."

When he had offered to race against any of Mr. Maitland's horses at any distance he had meant, of course, any of the usual distances run nowadays. But he had not specified this. He perceived how well he had been tricked by the astute Jenkins; he saw the reason why Hawaiian Prince and Piccadilly had not been with the rest of Mr. Maitland's horses during the last month; saw also the reason for Jenkins' frequent morning absences from the track.

Why had he not foreseen some such trick on Jenkins' part? The sense of his own powerlessness maddened him. It was too short a time to prepare King in the slightest degree for the longer distance. He should have to rely on the horse's gameness, and on his own riding to nurse him through a distance he had never yet been called upon to run.

Into Ran's miserable thoughts would creep, now and then, a wild little hope that, after all, his wonderful horse might still win the race for him. Of the money he should gain thereby he did not think at all—only of the possibility of being able to keep King. He knew his tremendous stamina, his courage, as great as that of his granddam, who had remained beside the body of his father amid all the terrors of the battle. And there existed the same love, the same sympathy between himself and the gelding as had existed between his father and the mare. Might not the magnificent descendant of Twigg and Black Snake win from the tricks of Mr. Maitland and Jenkins, after all?

At his meager breakfast the next morning Botetourt received a letter from Hurley Krafft. One or two phrases of evil omen caught his eye, and he read on more carefully. Finally the full significance burst upon him. He was asked to repay at once the seven thousand dollars he had borrowed, and if he did not do so he, Hurley Krafft, was instructed to offer the plantation, Kings Grant, for sale at public auction to satisfy the claim of the creditor.

Ran was stunned. His plantation to be offered at public auction unless he repaid this loan at once! What preposterous idea was that? In his moments of deepest dejection it had not occurred to him that this deed of trust could endanger his possession of his home.

His place, Kings Grant, which had belonged to his fathers since the beginnings of America, offered to the highest bidder! Randolph Botetourt believed that he had tasted his bitterest thoughts before, but they were nothing to his present state of mind.

Leaving his untasted breakfast, he swung along the road leading to the race track, his fists clenched, his face drawn and stern.

"Fool! Fool! You arrant fool!" he apostrophized himself. "Nothing but your own folly, your own conceit, has got you into this."

And bitterest of all was the image of Clarissa hovering before his mind's eye. The possibility of winning her, too, he had risked, with his horse and his plantation—everything that made life dear to him.

CHAPTER XX.

LAYING A HA'NT.

The dying of Ran's cattle interested Pembroke deeply—interested and divided it. The battle raged bitterly between the poison men and the new-disease men, with incursions, from time to time, by those who held the place simply to be hoodooed. Neither new disease nor hoodoo appealed to Arthur and Clarissa Maitland.

"Clarissa, I'm going to find out who is poisoning Ran's cattle," Arthur said one day to his sister.

"How are you going about it?"

"I'm going to patrol Kings Grant every night. You'll have to help me keep Aunt Eu in the dark. She'd have a fit if she knew what I was doing. You must——"

"But I'm going, too," Clarissa cried.

"You?" Arthur repeated doubtfully.

"Yes, me!"

Clarissa was determined, and Clarissa had her way. That night the two young people ostentatiously retired to bed. A half hour later they crept downstairs and out of the house. Arthur was armed with a shotgun, and Clarissa with a revolver.

They passed by the deserted half-mile track, treading softly and speaking in low tones, stopping often to listen, and peering all about for "Old Moon Head" as the darkies had christened the ha'nt. Far and wide they roamed. Midnight passed, and one o'clock. Suddenly Clarissa clutched her brother's arm and pointed up a gully thickly grown up in sassafras bushes.

"There he is!" she said in a quiet, tense tone.

Arthur felt a curious, crinkly sensation run up his spine as he perceived a round, luminous object floating along over the top of the undergrowth, stopping occasionally and then going forward—exactly as the darkies had described it.

For a second Arthur hesitated; then he rushed up the gully, Clarissa close behind him. At sound of their footsteps, the luminous object rose into the air as if it were indeed a head, raised to take a view, and swooped down toward them. When not more than a hundred feet from them *It* disappeared. It did not fly away or fall to the ground. Simply one moment it was there; the next it was not.

Its disappearance was more gruesome than its appearance had been. Arthur and Clarissa stopped and stared at each other in the night.

"There was something there, wasn't there?" Arthur asked, almost doubting his senses.

"There certainly was," Clarissa answered.

"Well, there's nothing there now," said Arthur.

"There certainly isn't."

Together they made their way up the gully. Once they thought they heard cautious footsteps, but when they stopped to listen there was nothing to be heard.

"Well, I guess there is nothing more we can do to-night," Arthur said, after they had tramped all about the place where they had seen the apparition.

In the next ten days the cattle poisoning was of almost nightly occurrence, and Arthur and Clarissa became nearly frantic in their desire to discover the perpetrator of it. Their nightly vigils began to tell on them, and Miss Eulalie worried greatly over their hollow-eyed appearance.

One day Arthur came to his sister toward nightfall and said: "See here, Clarissa, you've got to stay at home and sleep to-night, so that you can be around more in the daytime. Do you know what I've found out that Aunt Eu has done? She's written up to Doctor Rumely to ask if there's any sleeping disease in Virginia."

That night Arthur patrolled Kings Grant alone till past two o'clock. Just as he was about to give up the quest for the night—he saw *It*. Stealthily he crept toward it, his gun ready, fearing almost to breathe lest it hear him. The intense straining of his eyes in the dark gave him a sense of giddiness. He shut them and passed his hand over his forehead. Was he fifty yards away now, or three times that distance? It was as difficult to estimate as the size of the moon on the horizon.

Then he heard a reassuring sound—only the snapping of a twig, but he

laughed silently as he heard it, for ghostly footsteps do not snap twigs. Losing some of his caution in his elation, he himself clattered noisily over a fallen branch.

Old Moon Head vanished. With a shout Arthur dashed forward.

"Halt, or I'll fire!" he called.

There was a swish through the air. Something struck his head a glancing blow, fell hard upon his shoulder, and plumped to the ground.

At his feet lay the moon head, luminously white.

Arthur shyed like a terrified horse, and for an instant terror—cold, unreasoning, superstitious terror—gripped him. Then upon his consciousness beat the pattering sound of fleeing footsteps, and Arthur dashed on in pursuit.

The ha'nt ran fast. A few minutes proved to Arthur that, incumbered by his gun, he was not gaining on the fugitive. He halted, and fired twice. In reply to the second shot came a yell of pain; but the fear of death lent wings to the ha'nt, and his footsteps only flew the faster.

Arthur threw away his gun, and tore after him. Across the pasture they went, startling the night-grazing cattle. Arthur was gaining. He could make out a bulky, heavy-set form not far in front. Just before reaching the fence of the country road he caught up with it.

"Halt there!" he yelled.

The figure staggered against the fence, his breath coming in great, grunting gasps.

Arthur's own breath was well-nigh spent. He put his hand into his pocket, brought forth his knife, and pointed it at the negro, pistolwise. For a few minutes neither spoke. Arthur regained his wind first.

"So I've caught you at last! You are the blackguard who's been poisoning Mr. Botetourt's cattle. I've a great mind to put a bullet into you right now."

"'Twan't me—I ain't got nuthin' 'gainst Marse Ran."

"Who got you to do it, then?" Arthur demanded.

"I done promise' not to tell," he muttered. "Will you let me go ef I tell you?"

"No, I won't. But"—he raised his right hand to the level of his eyes, and pointed the knife straight at the cowering figure—"I'll promise not to shoot you right now if you do tell."

"Doan shoot—doan shoot, mister," quailed the negro, in fear of instant death. "It was Mistuh Kraff' done hire' me to drop a li'l' poison 'roun' heah."

"Hurley Krafft?" Arthur repeated, amazed. His right hand fell to his side.

In a flash the negro went crashing over the rails. Arthur sprang after him, but tripped on one of the disarranged rails and went down on hands and knees. He regained his feet, stepped into a deep rut in the road, his ankle turned, and he went down again.

Arthur could not help having a sneaking sense of relief when the negro had escaped. The fate of a cattle poisoner would not long have been in doubt in a community where a sense of swift justice still lingered. Anyway, the discoverer of the real instigator of the poisoning was worth the punishment of a dozen tools.

As he walked slowly homeward across the fields, pondering on the best course to pursue with Hurley Krafft on the morrow, he almost stepped on the shining white thing that had terrorized the negroes of the plantation so long.

He stooped and picked up the moon head. It was a large piece of heavy cardboard, black on one side, heavily coated with phosphorescent paint on the other, affixed to a pole, which gave it its height. To appear or disappear,

all one had to do was to turn the phosphorescent or the black side to view.

It was daylight when Arthur reached home. As soon as the servants appeared he had a hasty breakfast and was off to town before Clarissa or his aunt were up. He was not long in learning what sort of an explanation the little lawyer had to offer when he confronted him in his office.

"*Sh!*" Krafft glanced apprehensively about him. "You gave me a start, young man; indeed you did. Some one might have heard you."

"Every one will hear me before long," Arthur replied grimly.

Krafft laughed silently. "This *is* funny! It's lucky you came straight to me or there'd have been a pretty kettle of fish. It's all right; it's only a little scheme we cooked up together, your father and me, to——"

"*My father?* You lie!"

Arthur raised so threatening a hand that Krafft nimbly side-stepped around a table.

"I am sorry to hear you use such language, Mr. Arthur," he said, with as much dignity as his rapid movements permitted. "Mr. Maitland wants Kings Grant, and Ran Botetourt won't sell. 'If a horse won't drink *he must be made to*'—those were your father's own words, and, after all, he did offer a magnificent price for the place."

Arthur stood turned to stone.

Hurley Krafft prattled on, explaining, amplifying—and crediting Mr. Maitland with much that had emanated from his own brain. But Mr. Maitland's son was not critical. The awful thing was that his father should have been behind this poisoning of the cattle of a neighbor—of a man who ate at his table, whose track he had used, who considered him a friend. Ah, what fortune that he had told nothing to Clarissa! His wish to shield his father was equally strong with his determination that full restitution must be made to Ran.

Arthur turned, and left the office without another word to Krafft. The latter drew a long breath of relief.

"Whew! That was a narrow squeak! Of all people, deliver me from a well-intentioned busybody."

CHAPTER XXI.

MAITLAND VS. MAITLAND.

On his way back to Red Oak Arthur tried to compose himself so that neither his aunt nor his sister should suspect anything to be amiss. He went to his room, and was packing his suit case when Clarissa knocked on his door.

"Come in!" he called.

She opened the door. "I'd like to know why you had to sneak off to town at such an unearthly hour this morning?" she demanded reproachfully. "I wanted to go in with you."

"Why, I happened to be up early, and——"

"Pooh! And what are you doing with that?" She pointed a slim finger at the suit case.

"I'm just going to run up North for a few days," he replied carelessly. "I want to see a horse race or two and see how Ran's getting along—he's a rotten correspondent—and what father's doing."

Clarissa regarded her brother more in sorrow than in anger. He *was* an unfinished dissembler.

"I'll come, too," she said, after a little reflection.

"Oh, it wouldn't be worth the trouble," he objected hastily. "I shall be back in a couple of days."

"H'm! You 'just want to see a horse race or two,' do you?" she mimicked him. "You'll quit patrolling Kings Grant and dash away under cover of an ostentatiously debonair manner and leave me behind quite innocent and un-

suspecting, will you? Arthur Maitland, if you think you're a born diplomat, permit me to inform you that 'you ain't.' Now look me in the eyes and tell me what all this means."

Arthur could not help laughing. "Clarissa, I wish you wouldn't be so infernally perspicacious. I *have* found out something—about the poisoning. I can't tell you—only I don't believe there'll be any more of it. Now are you still coming North with me?"

"I am," answered Clarissa firmly.

Arthur and Clarissa arrived late at night at the hotel where Mr. Maitland was staying. Both were very tired, and Clarissa soon went to her room.

Mr. Maitland noticed his son's haggard and constrained manner. "You seem to be pretty well tuckered out yourself," he said kindly. "I've got a big race on with Randolph Botetourt to-morrow, so I guess we'd better go to bed, too."

But Arthur could not let the night pass with that on his mind which had brought him North.

"Father, I want to tell you why I am here." And he burst forth with the whole miserable thing he had discovered.

Mr. Maitland listened to him quietly. He was annoyed, but did not show it. From the manner of the two men Arthur might have been the guilty one, his father the accuser. When it was all told, the magnate said quietly:

"Arthur, I give you my word that I did not authorize Krafft to have Ran's cattle poisoned. He said he could get me Kings Grant, and I told him to go ahead and get it."

"You did not care what means he employed?"

"No, I didn't."

"But, now that you *do* know, you will wire Krafft to-night that you no longer wish Kings Grant."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. So long as an agent of mine performs his work faithfully I never interfere with him."

Arthur turned away his head. It was bitter to realize that the standards which seemed to him the only ones a man could be guided by were nothing to his father. After a minute he went on slowly, as if even yet he could not make himself believe the worst:

"Am I right, then, in my understanding that you are deliberately trying to ruin a man who is a—a friend of yours—a friend of your son and daughter—a neighbor whose track you have used all the spring as a favor?" He glanced at his father, and the magnate returned the look with one of granite. Then Arthur went on slowly: "Of course I knew you had the reputation of being unscrupulous. I never knew what that meant exactly. I always thought 'business' was different from real life—something to which the ordinary rules of conduct did not apply."

"It's about time you were cutting your eye teeth," Mr. Maitland snapped.

"On the train coming up here," Arthur went on in the same slow manner, "I have been putting two and two together. I know now why those cattle were offered Ran at such a low price last March. I know who lent him the money to buy them with—I know the whole hellish plot to ruin a man who has never injured you in any way, and whose sole crime is that he will not sell his place to you."

Mr. Maitland gave Arthur the first glance of admiration he had bestowed on him for a number of years. "You have more of a head on your shoulders than I gave you credit for," he observed.

"It's time I began to use it," Arthur replied. "Now I must require you to reimburse Ran for all the loss you have caused him—for every steer you have poisoned."

Mr. Maitland stared in utter aston-

ishment at his son speaking in this tone of quiet, forceful insistence.

"Perhaps you would like to have me add the profit he would have made on them had they lived," he blurted forth sarcastically.

Arthur considered this. "Yes, I think that would be fair."

Mr. Maitland leaned back in his chair and burst into loud laughter. No situation in his life had ever struck him as so humorous. "Ho! ho!" he roared in abandoment unusual with him. "Well, son, I guess we'd better go to bed after this. Ho! ho! ho! I don't believe you can improve on that." He got to his feet. "Good night, Arthur; your fevered brow needs a cool pillow to rest upon."

Arthur was watching his father sadly. "Then you refuse?" he asked.

His quiet, earnest manner tickled the father afresh, and he went off into another gust of laughter.

"I shall have no other alternative, if you do, except to inform Ran of what I have discovered."

Mr. Maitland's laughter came to a sudden end.

"Eh? What's that? *Inform Ran!*" Mr. Maitland glared at his son. "You young puppy, this is going beyond a joke. You're crazy!"

"I shall do so unless you send a wire to Hurley Krafft to-night saying that you are no longer in the market for Kings Grant, and promise me that you will reimburse Ran. We can arrange it so that he will never know from whom the money comes."

"Money nothing! What in —— can he do if you do tell him? The negro is scared out of the country, and Hurley Krafft will swear himself black in the face for me. No one would believe you. No, I've a better way. I'll have you shut up in a private sanitarium before morning. Why, you *are* crazy! You'll never set foot outside of this hotel as a free man."

Mr. Maitland stepped toward the old-fashioned bell rope.

"Hold on, father!"

The older man stopped, thinking he heard surrender in his son's voice.

"I may not be able to leave this hotel, but Clarissa is in the next room. If you do not send that wire this instant I shall tell her within three minutes. She will believe me whether you clap me into an insane asylum afterward or not."

Mr. Maitland gave a grunt, as does a boxer when a blow lands on the solar plexus. Clarissa was the only person in the world of whom he was afraid. The realization of it came to him at this moment. For twenty seconds he stood still, reviewing the situation with lightning speed, and oddly enough he was thinking less of himself than of his son. For thwarting him he could almost have murdered Arthur, yet at the same time there glowed within him a sense of pride in his son such as never in his life had he felt for him until the fighting blood in Arthur came out.

"All right," he capitulated at the end of the twenty seconds. "Bring me a night-telegraph blank. You're more a Maitland than I had given you credit for."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WINNER.

The program announced in bold-faced type that the fourth race of the day would be the special match, at four miles, between Mr. J. C. Maitland's Hawaiian Prince and Mr. Randolph Botetourt's Kings Grant—ridden by his owner—each horse to carry one hundred and forty pounds.

The betting was ten to seven on Hawaiian Prince. Jenkins, the silent-mouthed, had not been able to refrain from bragging to a few intimates of the way he had outwitted Botetourt, and the secret, once loosed, spread on the winds

Ran rode King upon the track first, and a rustle of handclapping swept over the grand stand at sight of the noble animal prancing along with exuberant strength and spirits.

Of the thousands of eyes fixed upon Botetourt a pair of hazel eyes looked down upon him with an anxiety such as the ladies of former times must have felt when their men rode forth to take part in jousts—and the hazel eyes seemed to divine that he was riding as truly for her as ever rode knight of old for his lady.

Hawaiian Prince appeared next, long and lean and vicious looking—a veritable speed machine; trained by a master mind, and ridden by the great jockey, Dexter, a bundle of unscrupulous nerves.

Dexter glanced toward his rival with contempt. Yet there were good horsemen among the spectators who did not hold Botetourt cheaply. They watched his hands playing with the reins and restraining King's exuberance, with a touch as delicate as that of a master violinist fingering his bow.

And these men decided: "That fellow can ride!"

Less critically two pairs of eyes—a hazel and a blue—were regarding him from the grand stand, while two hearts beat almost to suffocation.

"Oh, *can't* he ride!" cried Clarissa.

"He certainly can," Arthur replied solemnly. They had not seen Ran before. There had been many things for Arthur to attend to that morning.

"Come!" Clarissa cried. "I can't stay up here. I want to go down nearer the horses."

Kings Grant and Hawaiian Prince faced the starter.

The moment when eternity seemed to stand still passed at last.

"They're off!" came the hoarse, glad shouts which speed on each new race, as freighted with hopes as if no other race had ever been run—and lost.

There was no jockeying on either side; it was not worth the trouble in a four-mile race. Besides, Dexter was supremely confident of winning without having to resort to any tricks.

Botetourt, on the other hand, very pale for all his sun-tanned skin, gave no thought to the applauding and cheering crowd whose good wishes he carried, even if they placed their money on the other horse. Oddly enough, as they rounded the turn, the memory of his first race on King, in Marytown, came back to him. How different were his feelings then—and now. Then he had everything to gain and little to lose. To-day, with so much greater odds against him, how infinitely more he had to win—and to lose.

But he could not linger over the past when the present claimed every resource of mind and body. King was carrying lightly on his strong, short back this weight he had not borne in a race the whole summer long. He chafed against the moderate speed, and tried to forge ahead. If the weakling at his side was content with a snail's pace, no reason why he, King, should not show him what racing speed was. Arching his neck, he tried to escape from the restraining snaffle, but not thus could he befool his master, who soothed and petted him and made him understand finally that he was not yet to try to leave the side of this other horse.

Presently King's impatience departed from him. This was an afternoon's canter, after all, he reasoned, in spite of everything which had made him think he was racing. He settled down into a long, breezy gallop, ceased to fret at the bit, and even pricked forward his ears and took an interest in the casual sights around him.

A mile passed thus; then Dexter began to hurry the Prince.

Clarissa and Arthur had forgotten all about the comfortable seats they had deserted in the grand stand. It

was better here among the shouting, cursing, eager railbirds than back yonder where the whole thing was just a pretty picture of track and grass and judges' stand and picturesque crowds, with two tiny puppets drawn by strings over the canvas. Here they could feel the sweep and rush of the horses as they passed, could hear the thunder of their hoofs, and could sense the strain and striving of their riders.

King began to lag behind. If he were not to be permitted to race this other horse, he saw no reason for wearying himself with senseless running around and around the track when he already had enough jogging for the day. Botetourt's knees and voice instantly urged him forward again, and, with a flirt of his tail, as if to say, "Oh, very well! If you wish me to keep up with this ambulance horse, it's all the same to me," King drew up alongside him again.

After they had passed the grand stand for the second time, the Virginia horse's opinion of the ambulance horse gradually changed. This was no weakling, this long, lean fellow, with his tireless stride, running ever more strongly. The brown no longer looked around the track or took an interest in casual sights. He attended strictly to business now, galloping stride to stride with his rival, his head at the other's girth. At least Hawaiian Prince could be forced to set the pace.

"If only I had specified two weeks —one week's notice of the distance," were Botetourt's bitter thoughts. He could feel that King was beginning to labor as they came down the home stretch for the third time. Would he be able to go the cruel, long mile ahead?

Out of the corners of his eyes Dexter cast ugly looks at his rival. He had expected to shake off the Virginian before this. His whip came down—a trifle injudiciously—on the Prince; but in spite of the horse's response to it, King stuck tenaciously to him. Yet Botetourt felt that even the brown's magnificent courage could not force lungs and muscles to do the impossible.

Curled down on his horse's withers, Ran crooned to him, talking to him as a mother might to an only child, as a lover might to his mistress. And the big thoroughbred still could turn an ear back to catch his voice.

Eyes bloodshot, nostrils flaming like fire, gasping breath, and staggering legs, he plunged along beside Hawaiian Prince, nor could the latter gain an inch.

They were rounding the last turn. Ran reefed the bit through Kings Grant's mouth, and still talked to him —his voice more potent to the horse than steel or whalebone.

In the straight Dexter began to flog mercilessly. He brought down the whip at every jump, and slowly, slowly Hawaiian Prince began to draw ahead. This was the instant he had been trained for during two long months.

The grand stand was in an uproar. Waves of shrieking sound swept down the rail—preceding, alongside, and following the horses.

Then, out of this uproar, when it seemed impossible to distinguish any single sound, Ran heard Clarissa's voice —heard it as distinctly as if he had been sitting on the porch with her at Red Oak:

"Oh, Ran, you *must* win!"

At Clarissa's call there rushed through Ran's arteries a flaming energy that was like a miracle—a flaming energy that flowed from himself to his horse; and a wilder shriek swirled over the mob as it perceived that Hawaiian Prince was no longer drawing ahead—that Kings Grant was holding his own —that inch by inch he was regaining his lost ground.

At the very last, seeing he could not

stave off King's sprint, Dexter deliberately pulled his mount across into the Virginian.

King staggered, lost his stride, and a few feet beyond the wire stumbled and fell, pitching his rider far over his head.

In thirty seconds there was so dense a mass of humanity around the fallen man and horse that a cat could hardly have wormed her way within. Yet, of all the nimble throng that clustered about man and horse, Clarissa was the first to reach the Virginian; and when gradually he came back to this world, it was Clarissa's face he saw bending over him, it was Clarissa's voice he heard saying: "Oh, Ran, speak to me—speak to me!" while Arthur was kneeling at his side, fanning him with his hat.

He thought it only a misty dream, composed half of the lovely and half of the grotesque, as dreams are; for beside Clarissa and Arthur there was a demoniac ring of nightmare faces peering down upon him from all sides. So he did not reply, and closed his eyes again.

But the fingers did not vanish from his forehead; and he reached feebly up and found that they were real. Clasping them, for a time he was quite content. Then, very slowly, memory returned to him, and with an effort he asked:

"Did—King—win?"

"Yes, dear, you won," Clarissa answered.

To which a fat man, wearing the horsiest waistcoat on the track, took upon himself to add:

"By an eyelash, young feller. That last sprint you got out of your pony did the business—and I lost a cool thousand by that eyelash."

"Is—King—hurt?"

Ran tried to raise himself, but found he had not strength to move.

As if in answer, there came a wild surge of the mass clustered around the horse, and, with a mighty heave, King scrambled to his feet. The impact of this surge broke the ring around Botetourt, and through an opening Mr. Maitland came up. He took in the picture of Clarissa holding Ran's head in her lap, and of Arthur kneeling beside him. From there he glanced to the judge's stand, where the Virginian's number was displayed as winner of the race. The magnate stroked his chin.

"I tried to get his place, and I tried to get his horse—and he's taken my son, he's taken my money, he's taken my daughter. Well," he ended, with a grim smile, "I guess he's the sort of man it's best to keep in the family."

HOLMAN DAY will open the next POPULAR. His new novel, a big book-length one, will be published complete in the June 23rd issue. It is entitled:

"A Two-Spot in the Big Game" *a tale of the sea*

DOWN A GALLOPING SEA WITH HOLMAN DAY IS ONE OF THE RAREST OF PLEASURES **Don't Miss It**

Human Nature, Incorporated

BEING THE PEREGRINATIONS OF PEPPER McHENRY, THE JOYOUS SON OF OLD HARVARD, WHO NOW ADVENTURES ON A BUSINESS CAREER

By Holworthy Hall

Author of "Pepper," "The Terrible Freshman," Etc.

AS soon as Pierson Dillingham graduated from college without seriously inconveniencing the faculty, his father, who was self-made and proud of it, summoned him to the private office, and explained that Pierson must now forget all that he had learned, mend his general deportment and the pattern of his haberdashery, discard his sense of humor, buy a pair of overalls, and become a respectable member of society.

More specifically, he said that Pierson was expected to shed the light of his countenance upon the sorting room of the carpet factory for eight working hours a day, and to absorb enough intelligence so that in the course of twenty or thirty years he would be capable of continuing the paternal vocation of turning out first-class Oriental rugs for export to Persia and the Ottoman empire.

Mr. Dillingham had taken for granted the joy and gratitude which Pierson would display when the glad news was broken to him. Naturally he was disconcerted when Pierson said he wanted to go into business for himself.

Reproducing the pomp of the Persians, said Pierson, and manufacturing pseudo-Turkish rugs was an occupation no more pleasing to him than printing tracts for the Madagascar heathen, or toiling as a linesman for the Marconi system. It wasn't that he was ungrateful for the education, food, clothing, electric lights, steam heat, and all the other accessories to a happy boyhood which Mr. Dillingham had just catalogued for him, but simply that he didn't want to work for any one but himself.

"What you really mean," said his father, still dazed by the realization that his son didn't care to earn six dollars a week in the sorting room, "what you really mean is that you don't want to *work!*"

"Not a bit of it!" retorted Pierson. "As a matter of fact, I'll have to work ten times as hard in New York as I would here. And, besides, it seems to me I've heard you talk about your own independence—how you started out with seventy dollars and a pine table and——"

"But I was a very different kind of boy!"

"And yet you say you wish you'd had my opportunities! There's no use thinking it over any longer. I want to stand on my own feet."

"And that's what Harvard College has done for you!" said Mr. Dillingham, in the well-known voice of such fathers. *"That's* the result of four years of time and thought and money!"

"Well, dad," said Pierson, "I think you make a mistake when you assume that my education's a failure merely because I don't want to make carpets for a living. And I don't want to be an inside man, anyhow—I want to get out and meet people."

"Pierson!" interrupted his father. "Listen to common sense! What do you know about people? Because you made friends easily among a lot of lahdedah college boys, do you honestly imagine you can go out into the world and meet *people* and get their money away from 'em?"

"Then you don't think I'm right?"

"I think you're an average sample of the college graduate! College! College life! College spirit! Poppycock! You'll be back here in six months looking for a job, and I suppose I'll be just foolish enough to give it to you. Well, go ahead! After you've had your tumble you'll listen to reason."

"Then you don't admit the possibility of my making good?"

Mr. Dillingham laughed shortly.

"With no experience and no capital? You might just as well try to start a bank or a new railroad. Humph! What's this junk you're going to try to sell?"

"Diamond ink and glue. They'll give me New York State for two years. And I've got a thousand dollars of my own money——"

"The stuff can't be any good," sniffed his father. "I never even heard of it."

"Well, there are a lot of good things we never hear about. When you come right down to it, I don't believe the Four Hundred have Dillingham rugs in their drawing-rooms, do you? And yet *we* think they're pretty fair."

"Pierson! Well, there's no use talking to a boy who knows it all. I'll tell the foreman you won't be here Monday. Of course, some of my friends will wonder—I'll have to tell 'em you won't condescend to work for your father, after he paid the bills to get you educated up to the point where you *can* work! Don't talk to *me* about what college does for a man! Later on you'll be mighty glad of a soft job to fall into—and when you can spare time from dillydallying with this Four Hundred you mention so intimately, you might let me know something about this Diamond brand."

"Why?" inquired Pierson, nonplused.

"Why? You don't expect to see me let my own flesh and blood starve to death, do you? You won't make enough in commissions to pay your office rent! I'm going to egg you on in your devilishness—I'm going to give you an order!"

From Room 5060 of the Flatiron Building a husky tenor breathed sweetness upon the surrounding atmosphere:

It's a long way to Gainesville, Texas; it's a long way to go;
It's a long way to Lyme, Connecticut; twice as far to Buffalo;
Good-by, Rye, New Hampshire; farewell, Cranford, New Jersey;
It's a long, long way to the cavity of my thorax,
But my hearrrrt—is there!

At this pleasing climax the door opened suddenly, and James Pepper McHenry halted on the threshold and transfixed the musician with an accusing eye.

"Pepper!" yelled Dillingham.

"What have you got here—a clinic?" observed Pepper. He dropped the suit case he was carrying, and met Dillingham's rush with a counterattack which knocked the breath from both of them.

"Why, you old hyena!" panted Dillingham. "When did you get here? How long can you stay? This is *great* ——"

"I can stay long enough for lunch, anyway. It's on me. Can you come?"

"Can I *come?* I'm *here!* Wait until I open my mail, will you?"

"Speed is essential," said Pepper. "Go to it!"

Dillingham replaced himself at his desk, and hastened to dispose of his correspondence. A tailor's bill—unopened—he slipped into a box file; a Harvard Club statement—unopened—he thrust into his pocket; a catalogue

from a subscription agency he tossed—unopened—in the wastebasket.

"All right, Pepper—we're off!"

"You're a busy little bee, aren't you? Where do we eat? How's business?"

"We eat around the corner—and business is rotten. I took a trip up the State last week. Say, they must count on their fingers up there, and use riveting machines to hold their letters together. In Albany I tore off a sale of a dozen glue to a bookbinder—ten per cent, thirty days. A boiler plant in Syracuse took a pint sample, and a stationery joint in Rochester wants a gross of five-cent writing fluid on consignment. I left ninety-seven cards and thirty-six samples, and saw a fight in Utica."

"Here's the feed bag, Pierce—come on in!"

"If I'd known you were coming over with an invitation," said Dillingham, "I wouldn't have eaten any breakfast!"

"Go as far as you like for forty cents," said Pepper cordially. "A half portion of lettuce and a demi-tasse makes a perfectly hygienic lunch for anybody. So business is pretty poor?"

"Poor?—make mine a small steak—it's something fierce! My company won't advertise until they see some sales around here, and I can't make any sales until I'm backed up by advertising. It's a fine proposition!"

"Hustle!" said Pepper.

"Hustle! I've hustled so much that I've got a running account with a chiropodist! I did have a stenographer, but I had to let her go last week—even if she *was* the cheapest of the chipper, and the punkest of the pulchritudinous—what bothers me now is how I'm going to stall the electric-light bill. And the funny part of it is that the stuff I'm handling is good—why, I use it myself!"

McHenry carved the steak.

"I was pretty much astonished when I heard you weren't in with your father, Pierce."

"Well—so was I. But it couldn't be done."

"Right! It can't. That's why I'm here."

"What?"

"I said that's why I'm here."

"You—you've quit *your* father?"

"Cold!" said Pepper. "I can't sell bonds. There wasn't any chance to use originality. I like to plan schemes, and work 'em out. And, besides, they sent me up into Minnesota—when I left Chicago they said it might be a little chilly there, but it would be so dry I wouldn't notice it. Then I hit St. Paul in a blizzard. It was so darned cold I didn't notice the dryness. That was the last straw. Dad and I agreed to disagree—he admitted that I was wasting my time in his office, and I admitted that I wasn't worth what he was paying me, and we wished each other luck—and here I am."

"But what are you going to do?"

"Search me," said Pepper. "I've got seven thousand dollars in real money. What I want to do is play around like a promoter. You know—find a good scheme, push it along, sell out at a profit, and find something else. It's interesting—and not *all* promoters land in Sing Sing."

Dillingham stared at him earnestly.

"Have you—a scheme in mind?"

"Not yet."

"Do you want one?"

"Is it a sure thing?"

"Well—not *sure*——"

"Will it pay a thousand per cent in six months?"

"Oh, never!"

"Will the price of the stock be raised positively from thirty cents to thirty-five cents on the third of next year—with a circular attached to show that for every dollar invested in telephone stock at the beginning the investor has got a million dollars in dividends?"

"Why, no, Pepper, of course not that——"

"Is it the chance of a lifetime; and will my heirs moan in their trundle-beds if I don't grab it?"

"Look here, Pep, I——"

"And is the stock full-paid, nonassessable, bought on the installment plan, with trading stamps, and a bonus of a prickly-pear patch in Arizona for every share?"

"No—listen, Pepper——"

"Then I'll talk about it," conceded McHenry. "What is it?"

"Why, it's my own ink-and-glue agency."

"Stung!" said Pepper reflectively. "I always talked too much about myself."

"No—it's really a good chance. I didn't have enough capital, that's all. I put in all I had, and the business is running behind about fifteen dollars a week. When you remember that I'm all alone, trying to sell wholesalers without any advertising, without any follow-up system, without any window displays, or any publicity at all, that isn't half bad."

"I should say not!"

"It would take—to put it over—maybe—seven thousand dollars."

"I made a mistake," said McHenry ruefully. "I ought to have left myself at least enough for car fare."

"Well, do you want to look it over?"

"Possibly. Can you sell the agency if you get a chance, or have you got to supervise it yourself—is that in your contract?"

"Oh, no!"

"Of course, if I go into it, Pierce, I wouldn't figure on staying in it forever. Selling glue isn't exactly my idea of a *carcer*—I'd plan to work it up, and then sell the agency to somebody else."

"All I want is my money back, and interest, and a good income afterward."

"We'd have to be a corporation," mused Pepper. "We'd want a charter that would let us do anything under the sun—then when we got through with this ink-and-stickum proposition, we could try something else. I'll tell you what I'll do, Pierce—if you want to get into the *promoting* business with me, I'm with you. We'll incorporate for, say, ten thousand. I'll put up five in cash, and you put up your agency as your share. Then I'll have a couple of thousand to windward. When we can get out of ink at a profit, we'll try another field. Does that sound interesting?"

"Five thousand in cash—why, Pepper, I—— You don't want to begin with a wallop like that—it's too much. I don't look like the kind of man who robs orphans of their jelly beans, do I?"

"You do," said McHenry. "Hurry up and finish that imitation coffee, old top. I want to get back and look over your plant."

Dillingham choked over his coffee.

"You've seen it, Pepper."

"That hole?" asked McHenry, aghast. "I thought you had a suite."

"That hole is right."

"Then we want to hurry back, anyway," said McHenry. "It doesn't look well for young business men to take too much time for lunch."

At this juncture Dillingham became mildly indignant.

"Say, Pepper, who's going to run this corporation, anyway?"

"James P. McHenry, president and general manager," said Pepper sweetly. "Hurry up, Pierce—every minute increases our overhead. Besides, we've got a lot to do this afternoon—see a lawyer, and get some stationery printed, and hire a stenographer——" He sighed wearily. "I hope there are some good shows in town, Pierce—something light and airy to appeal to the tired business man. I feel it in my bones that we're going to need one."

At the end of two days' honest toil,

McHenry turned to his classmate and associate, and shrugged his shoulders.

"As far as I can make it out," he said, "this is nothing but a selling problem."

"Well," said Dillingham, "that's what I told you in the first place."

"Yes, but you didn't tell me why. The answer is that it's a horrible waste of time to see the little fellows. They don't buy enough to make 'em worth while seeing. We've got to land the big boys."

"You can't land 'em too fast to suit me; old top!"

"No. Well, let's sic our gigantic intellects on the situation. Who's the biggest wholesaler we can possibly deal with?"

"John H. Wilkins," said Dillingham promptly. "The Human Crab. He has a disposition like two strange bulldogs. But there's no use going over there, Pep. I've been in eighteen separate and distinct times, and I never got past the switchboard operator. He won't see you."

"He's got to see me," said Pepper imperturbably. "Don't you realize how much of the essence of lampblack and the skin of little fishes we've got to sell to get your money back and a profit for both of us? This touchy gentleman has got to see me and give me an order for —well, say a carload."

"But I've been over there, I tell you again——"

"The bigger they are," said Pepper, "the harder they fall. I think I'll run down and have a friendly chat with John H. Where does he hang his hat?"

"He's at 285 Broadway, but it won't do any good——"

"I'll tell you later whether it does or not," said Pepper, and he went out and boarded a Broadway car.

John H. Wilkins, the Human Crab, happened to be within earshot when McHenry ranged alongside the switchboard and mentioned an interview. He came forward with the air of welcome generally ascribed to a farmyard bloodhound. He was reputed to be the meanest man in the county, and sometimes to wish that he were meaner, and he looked it.

"My card," said Pepper, presenting it civilly.

John H. Wilkins glanced at it, contracted his eyebrows, glared blackly at the young man, and slowly tore the card into fine bits, which he dropped on the floor. He then dusted his fingers carefully.

"Great Scott!" said Pepper impulsively. "Don't you know those cards cost money?"

John H. Wilkins addressed the bookkeeper at his elbow.

"Give this man five cents—charge it to profit and loss," he commanded. "Now, then—you want an order, I suppose. I'll give you two orders. One's to get out, and the other's to stay out. I don't care to listen to you."

In the meantime McHenry had produced a second card, which he balanced neatly on the railing.

"They come two for a nickel," he volunteered. "Here's the other."

The stationer ripped it twice across.

"Well—what are you hanging around here for? I told you I don't want to listen to you."

"I'm waiting for the nickel," said Pepper placidly.

"If I had a son like you," observed John H. Wilkins, punctuating with the palm of his hand on the railed gate, "I'd know just exactly what to do with him. I'd——"

"He couldn't have a much worse punishment than trying to sell goods to *you!*"

"Don't get personal!" rasped Mr. Wilkins.

"I'm not. I only anticipated what you were going to say. When can I talk ink to you?"

"Now, see here," said Mr. Wilkins

petulantly, "I'm busy—I can't be bothered with all you fellows coming in here all the time. What *do* you want?"

"I want to sell you some ink."

"I have all the ink I can use."

"All right," agreed McHenry comfortably. "Then let's talk glue."

"I don't need any glue. Is that all?"

"Why," said Pepper, "I suppose you might say that you also have a suit of clothes, but that doesn't mean that you'll never buy another, does it? I'd like to tell you about my line——."

"Not this morning, anyway. I'm busy."

"Any time you say, Mr. Wilkins."

"Next Thursday at two o'clock I'll see you for three minutes."

"Three minutes!" exclaimed Pepper. *"Three minutes!"*

"No more, and no less. And you'll have to be here at two sharp if you want to see me at all. I'm *busy!"* He walked away, and McHenry saw a girl hurrying ahead of him with a business phonograph. It was obviously Mr. Wilkins' hobby to imagine that he was overworked. McHenry exhaled sorrowfully, and went back to his office.

"Pierce," he began, "we're all wrong! We're all wrong! Our puzzle isn't to sell ink—it's to sell ideas! To be perfectly honest about it, I can't see that these Diamond brands are any better than a lot of other stuff on the market. What we've got to do is to slap so much individuality into a five-cent bottle that a man would think we're selling seidlitz powders and dynamite!"

Dillingham grinned, and inquired: "As, for example?"

"For example, I saw your facetious friend——"

"Wilkins? Did you? What did he say?"

"He's going to give me a couple of minutes toward the end of the week. And then it occurred to me that there's mighty little you can say in three minutes. And then it occurred to me that there's no particular *reason* why the head of a business should give a hang what ink or glue he uses, as long as they're fairly decent. So naturally we have to talk to some deputy second assistant bookkeeper, who also doesn't give much of a hang, and buys where he can get either the best price or the best graft. So we've got to reach the boss with a big argument—something distinctive and catchy, and I think I've got the idea."

"Spring it, Pep!"

"First, we'll have to spend about five hundred dollars for equipment."

"What kind?"

"Mechanical. And then we'll have to hire a dozen men to canvass offices—they'll have a blind, of course, but they'll really be doing a little high-class detective work for us."

"Pepper, be serious!"

"Serious? It's my money, isn't it? Then we'll have to hire another room up here, and get two or three stenographers, and a boy or two——"

"Pepper!"

"Do you remember the way Roger Ward earned his way through college for a year, Pierce?"

"Why, yes, but——"

"That's it! The automatic salesman. Now, for the love of Mike, keep still and let me think. I've got to work out the details of this scheme, and get it running, and have a campaign all ready for this Wilkins barnacle before Thursday."

"All right, Pepper," said Dillingham, much subdued.

John H. Wilkins returned from lunch in an unusually pleasant frame of mind. He set to work with great urbanity, and not until his clock struck two did he allow his attention to stray from the cheerful task of estimating the cost of a complete set of books for a firm of private bankers who had too much money. As the clock struck, however, he looked

up with a frown, and met the smile of his prettiest stenographer, who was pushing the business phonograph over to his desk.

"I didn't send for that," said Mr. Wilkins. "Take it away. Where's that young runt who wants to talk ink?"

"Here he is!" giggled the stenographer.

"Where? Send him in, and say he can't have a second more than three minutes—I told you to take that thing away from here."

"This is Mr. McHenry," said the girl, as she unwrapped a wax cylinder and slipped it over the carrier.

"What?"

She handed him the twin receivers, and started the motor. John H. Wilkins, thoroughly mystified, placed the rubber tubes to his ears and listened. The motor whirred gently.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Wilkins," said McHenry's blithe young voice, and Wilkins started violently. "This record only runs three minutes, so I can't take more time than that even if I want to. We're talking about ink, now. Ink's full of human nature, Mr. Wilkins. Some of it's stubborn, and some of it's volatile, and some of it's thin and wishy-washy. The ink I want to sell you is sort of friendly and adaptable. You can use it just as well in fountain pens as you can in steel pens. It comes in a big bottle for the price. It's dead black, and it doesn't fade. And it dries so fast you don't need to use a blotter. You can't change a single letter after you've once written it—it's the greatest little check protector you ever saw. But if you spill any of it on your hands, you can wash it off with cold water without any soap.

"I'll tell you what I want to do with you. I want you to take a couple of cases of different lines at list prices; and as a little inducement to get you started, I'll give you free a tenth as much glue as you take ink, provided you'll use a little idea of mine for a window display in two of your retail stores, and push our stuff with the retailers. And then I've made a little deal with some fountain-pen people—I know whose you handle—so that I can offer you a five-cent bottle of our ink to give away with every fountain pen. That's new, isn't it?

"You see, Mr. Wilkins, the company that makes our stuff doesn't advertise. We can't persuade them to start advertising until we make enough sales in this territory so they can see daylight ahead. As soon as you and a few other jobbers put in good orders, there's no question about the advertising, which, of course, will help you all the more. But I'm willing to do this—if you'll take a half column in some newspapers I'll suggest advertising fountain pens, I'll let you give away a twenty-cent bottle of ink and a ten-cent bottle of glue free with each sale, and I'll pay half the cost of the advertising. Now—it's getting near the end of the record. I'm out by your switchboard, with some dope in one hand and my watch in the other. If you'll let me come in and talk to you for fifteen minutes, I'll make you a present of the dope; and if I stay longer than that, I'll make you a present of the watch. Unless you send for me, I'll put this same proposition up to somebody else. Can I come in?"

The motor stopped automatically. John H. Wilkins, the Human Crab, sat back in his chair and regarded the phonograph judgmatically. Across the room the stenographer, stifling still another giggle, awaited instructions. Mr. Wilkins made a sudden movement of the hand, hesitated, and deliberately set the reproducing needle back to the starting point. Precisely three minutes later he turned, and demanded of the girl: "What are *you* grinning at? Funny, isn't it? Don't you know time's money? Go out and tell that young chap to come on in here."

As McHenry appeared in the doorway, samples in one hand, watch in the other, and hat under his arm, John H. nodded vigorously.

"Put up that watch!" he snapped. "Most intelligent man I ever met—said three minutes and stuck to it. If this line of yours—say, which is which?—if it's worth looking at, it's worth taking time to look at. Put that hat on the floor. Sit down. Give me those samples."

Of course John H. Wilkins didn't know that McHenry had already persuaded the fountain-pen manufacturers to pay his share of that advertising!

Something in one of Pierson's letters acted upon a long-neglected brain cell of Dillingham, senior, so that as soon as he could conveniently leave the factory he took a fast train to New York, and hurried up to the Flatiron Building. Before the door of Room 5060 he halted and stared in uncomprehending amazement. So short a time as a month ago he had read between the lines of Pierson's weekly letter the certain doom of the State agency for Diamond inks and glues, but Pierson had written nothing of the actual crash, and yet here was a gilt inscription which showed only too clearly that the agency had passed away, and its former domain was preëmpted by——

THE CAMBRIDGE CO., INCORPORATED

Phonographic Specialties
Entrance, Room 5062

Mr. Dillingham, sorrowing, turned the knob at the appointed entrance, and stopped, paralyzed. He was facing a roomful of young women who were clattering away on new and expensive apparatus; through a glass partition in the middle distance he could see a young man at a birch-mahogany desk signing checks. Disregarding the girl who tried to intercept him, Mr. Dillingham marched straight to that inner sanctum, and thrust a hand at his wayward son.

"What on earth is *this* shebang?" he snorted. "Where's your ink-and-glue agency? What? Who are you working for now? Why didn't you tell me what you're doing?"

"Gee! I'm glad to see you!" cried Pierson, pushing forward a Bank of England chair for him. "Didn't I write you the story? I must have been too busy. Say, business is a great game, isn't it? How do you like the office? Don't you think we've got a peach of a place here?"

"Ink!" said his father. "Begin with the ink! Good Lord! You don't mean to tell me you've made enough money to keep on! What's the Cambridge Company? Why isn't your name on the door?"

"To tell you the truth, we're out of the ink business, dad——"

"You blew up? I thought so."

"We blew up in the sense that you blow up a stump with guncotton—so you can plant something better. We sold the agency."

"*Sold* it?"

"Certainly we sold it. We found a man who seemed to want it, so we just naturally let him have it. He paid us some real money, and we still have an interest in it."

"But I inferred—I thought you weren't even making expenses!"

"Oh, that was before McHenry came along."

"McHenry? That young idiot you wrote about so much when you were in college?"

"The same man, dad—we're in business together."

"Heaven help you!" said Mr. Dillingham piously.

"Oh, I'm not as rough as all that," said a cheerful voice from the doorway.

Mr. Dillingham, turning, beheld a short, lively young man with red hair

and an abnormally large mouth which appeared to contain more grin than Mr. Dillingham had even seen on a single countenance.

"Mr. McHenry, dad," said Pierson dryly.

"I—er—my remark——"

"Oh, never mind," Pepper reassured him. "That's what they all say. Has Pierce told you about our patent salesmen?"

"I was just coming to it, Pep."

"Doesn't he know?"

"I know nothing except what my son has seen fit to tell me," said Mr. Dillingham stiffly.

"The patent salesman," explained McHenry, draping himself gracefully on the edge of the desk, "hasn't any expense account, and doesn't sit around a hotel at night swapping stories and drinking high balls. He's the only hundred-per-cent man in existence."

"I don't understand——"

"Out in the back room," said Pepper, "you'll find 'em lined up like bell hops at a summer resort. They're phonographs. We don't use 'em for salesmen ourselves any more, but they certainly did the business for us while we did. It was this way: There were a lot of men who wouldn't see us, or listen to our story, so we found out who had business phonographs in their offices, and then we loaded up a few dozen records and sent 'em around. We had to do some underground work first, so we hired a handful of nice-looking boys out of jobs, and put 'em to work kidding the stenographers so they'd persuade the boss to listen to the record. They thought it was a joke, some of them. You see, it's pretty hard to condense a good selling talk into a three-minute record, but it's better than not having a chance at all. And even the people who thought it was a joke seemed to remember the name. Well, we tried forty-two times, and we sold twenty-nine customers. That wasn't bad at all. Then we located a man who wanted this agency worse than we did, so we sold it to him."

"You—you got it fairly started—you got it just where it began to show returns, and then you *sold!*" gasped Mr. Dillingham.

"Why, yes——"

"And—Pierson, you wouldn't work for me, because you wanted to be independent, but you're working for *this* concern——"

"Why, we *are* this concern!" said Pierson.

"What?"

"Surely we are. How does it strike you? Phonographic specialties. We furnish anything you want. It's Pepper's scheme—he worked it up out of an idea he had at college. Suppose you're a golfer, and you want to take a course of lectures by a big professional—we'll sell 'em to you. We've sold three hundred sets to golf clubs already. Or suppose you're a woman's club, and you want a lecture on medieval art, or suffrage, or eugenics—we have about thirty courses now, and more coming. The political crowd is crazy about it—it saves the speakers a lot of time and traveling. Of course they use our service only in small towns, where it wouldn't be worth while sending a crack speaker."

"And there's more money yet in special service," added Pepper. "We're getting up an individual set of records for John Wilkins——"

"Wilkins!"

"Yes, for his own advertising. We've collected a fairly complete list of every house in New York that has a business machine, and he wants to try the scheme himself. Then sales managers use records to jack up their salesmen—ginger records. And then we just had an order from a millionaire with a big art gallery—twenty records to explain the

paintings. When his friends come in and want to know about his stuff, he can turn on a record and hear all about the artist and the history of the painting and a regular professional lecture about it."

"Wilkins," stammered Mr. Dillingham. "That isn't the man who used to do our lithographing, is it, Pierson?"

"Oh, I guess so," said Pierson carelessly. "I didn't bother to remind him of it."

"And *he's* interested in this plan? I don't believe it! It can't be the man I know. He's one of the keenest men I ever knew in my life. I'd accept his judgment any day in the week. And if it's the Wilkins I think it is, he won't give you an order after he's thought it over a few times. Well—so this is the result of Harvard College on you two precious lads, is it?"

"Don't you like it?" queried Pepper.

"Like it! It's utter rubbish! Until the novelty wears off, you make clear expenses; but after that—poof!" He blew out an imaginary match, and looked at his son in grim foreboding. "You'd better come home," he said, "and take a good job in the factory while you have the chance."

"Shall we tell him?" asked Pierson of Pepper.

"*You* tell him," said Pepper to Pierson.

"The fact is," explained the son to his father, "that we're promoters."

"Promoters! You infants! What can *you* promote?"

"Well, for a starter, we promoted the ink agency, and we sold that. Then we've promoted this specialty business, and as soon as we finish dickering with a man, we'll sell this. Then we'll promote something else."

"Sell this crack-brained scheme! Who in thunder would be foolish enough to buy this?"

They both laughed.

"*You* tell him," said Pierson to Pepper.

"He's your father—it's *your* privilege," said Pepper to Pierson.

"As a matter of fact," hesitated the younger of the two Dillinghams, "it's to a guy named Wilkins—John H. Wilkins—the same man who bought the ink agency!"

Mr. Dillingham sat steeped in profound thought. From time to time he lifted his head to glance appraisingly at McHenry's serene and humorous features, or at the frank but slightly more serious expression of his son. Finally he spoke, calmly and without heat:

"Would you mind telling me just what you intend to do with yourselves?" he inquired. "That is, how you intend to shape your lives? I want to warn you that you're getting into deep water. Here you've already sold two worthless schemes—unless you stiffen up your morals you're likely to get into trouble."

"The schemes aren't worthless," objected Pierson warmly. Mr. Dillingham held up his hand.

"I say they are!"

"Well, if we could double our money in eight weeks or less, the other fellow ought to have a fighting chance!"

"Will you tell me what else you have in mind?"

"Sure we'll tell him!" said Pepper to his partner. "The next stunt is to promote an artist."

"An—an *artist!*" Mr. Dillingham was livid.

"Yes. We're living in a joint where there's a great boy. We're going to incorporate and commercialize him."

"It's no use," said Mr. Dillingham faintly. "I wash my hands of the whole business. I came here to help you—never mind." He shook hands solemnly with both of them. "Any time you want to come home, Pierson, your place will be waiting for you. I'm glad

to have had a look at you, Mr. McHenry. Good-by. If I stay in this atmosphere another minute I'll see things."

"That's the way *we* make money," said Pepper blandly.

To Mr. Dillingham, waiting for the elevator, a husky tenor floated through the wall:

Good-by, Rye, New Hampshire; farewell, Cranford, New Jersey;
It's a long, long way to the cavity of my thorax——
But my hearrrrt—is there!

"Crazy as loons!" sniffed Mr. Dillingham, stumbling into the express elevator. "I'll give 'em another six months to be flat broke. *Down!*"

"Wrong car, sir!" said the elevator boy. He pulled the lever. *"Going up!"*

The first series of the "Pepper McHenry" stories, now in book form, appeared in the POPULAR from June 1 to October 23, 1914, inclusive.

THE PART THE WIFE PLAYED

JERRY DONOVAN, who was a private in the United States marine corps, was a great fighter. He could fight two ways. One was against military foes, the other was against the Demon Rum. In the course of time he was assigned to look after the office and to do the errands of the commandant of the Brooklyn navy yard—the commandant being a man whose memory recalled the fact that Jerry never overlooked an opportunity, when on leave, to map out an elaborate campaign against the demon.

One morning Jerry appeared in the commandant's office, and said:

"Colonel, I want to speak to you to-day in an unusual manner. That is, I want to address you, not as a private to his commanding officer, but as man to man."

"Proceed," said the colonel.

"I have just had a letter from my wife over in Jersey City," explained Jerry, edging around the desk to get closer to the colonel. "She is very anxious for me to come home for three days. She says the roof of our house—a poor, little house it is, sir—needs fixing; the windowpanes have been broken and must be replaced; two or three of the washtubs have sprung leaks; and there are lots of little jobs that a man has to do around the house. You know how that is, sir. Colonel, will you be so kind as to give me three days' leave?"

"Is that what your wife's letter to you said?" asked the commandant.

"By the holy saints, it is—God help me!" replied Jerry.

"Well," the colonel continued, "I, too, received a letter from your wife this morning. She asked me on no account to give you leave because she knew you would get drunk and go home and beat her up."

Jerry looked around to see that there was no one else in the room. Then, with an air of extreme regret, he stepped very close to the colonel.

"I understand," said the Irishman, grasping the colonel's hand fervently, "we're talking as man to man, and not as a private to his commanding officer?"

"That's true," said the colonel.

"Then," commented Jerry seriously, "I want to say that you and I are two of the most beautiful liars in the world. I'm not married."

The Buccaneers

By H. De Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Pearl Fishers," Etc.

Mr. Stacpoole says that a true-born cable man is as rare as a good violinist; and he illustrates his point with a novel that for character-drawing and suspense and action surpasses most of the sea stories we have read. It is about a cable-cutting cruise that was to cost five hundred dollars a day. The cruise develops into a freebooting expedition, with both English and German cruisers in search of the sea robber. A deep-sea yarn bristling with dare-devil exploits.

(*A Novelette*)

CHAPTER I.

THE CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN BLOOD used to come down to McGinnis' wharf every afternoon to have a look round. The Captain was an Irishman of the black-haired, gray-eyed type from the west coast—a relic of the wreck of the Spanish Armada.

The Spanish strain in the Celtic nature makes for volcanic developments; and the Captain, from what we knew of him, formed no exception to this rule. He was known as "The Captain" *tout court* all along the front at San Francisco, from the China docks to Meiggs' Wharf. He was a character. Scarcely forty years of age, he had done most things that a man could possibly do in the way of sea-and-land adventure. He had run guns in the Spanish-American War, dug for gold at Klondike with the first batch of diggers, lost two fingers of his left hand in a dust-up on the Chile coast, and two ships in a manner considered dubious by the Board of Trade. But he never had lost a friend, nor an enemy. Unlike most of his class, he had nothing of the amphibian about him. Straight and well set up, he always managed to keep a clean, well-groomed appearance even in the teeth of adversity.

The Captain was seated to-day on a mooring bitt, watching the freighters loading with grain and the tugs and Italian whitehalls passing on the blue water of the bay. He was down on his luck, had been for the last month, and was in a condition of humor with the world that would have lent him to any job from piracy to the captaining of a hay barge.

Owners had fought shy of him ever since his last deep-sea adventure. Capable and sober enough, he had earned a reputation for recklessness that was a bar to employment as fatal as a reputation for drink. There were no more Klondikes to be exploited, perfect peace reigned on the west American seaboard from Vancouver to Wellington Island, piracy was out of date, and every hay barge had its captain.

There seemed no prospect before him

but either to go into the fo'c'sle or go on tramp, and as he sat on the mooring bitt, kicking his heels and watching the shipping, he was trying to decide which of these two prospects was the more hateful.

He had arrived at no decision on this point when he saw a figure approaching him. It was Billy Harman.

"Why, there you are!" said Billy. "Just the man I wanted to see. I looked into Sam Brown's, and you weren't there, and Sam said: 'Try down on the wharves; the Captain is sure to be down on the wharves on the lookout for his ship.'"

"I'll teach him to talk about me and my affairs," said Blood. "Well, now you've found me, what have you got for me?"

"A ship," replied Harman.

"Have you got it in your pocket?" said the Captain. "If so, produce it. A ship! And since what day have you turned owner?"

Mr. Harman produced a pipe and began to load it carefully and meditatively. His manner could not have been more detached had the Captain not been present.

Then, having lit the pipe and taken a draw, he seemed to remember the presence of the other.

"Yes," said he, "it's a sure-enough job if you wish to take it. I'd have had it myself, only I'm no hand at the deep-sea-cable business; but when the thing was spoken of to me I said: 'I've got the man you want who can do any job in that way better'n any man in Frisco.' You see, I knew you'd served two years on the *Groper*."

"The *Grapnel*, you mean."

"It's all the same; she were a cable ship, weren't she? And I said: 'If he'll go, I'll go myself as second off'cer. I can do the navigatin'.'"

"When the whisky bottle is out of sight," put in Blood.

"'And what's more,' said I, 'I'll get you a crew that's up to snuff and won't make no bother nor tell no yarns. You leave the job to me,' said I, 'and if I can get the Captain to come along it's fixed,' I says."

"Now look here, Bill Harman," said Blood, shifting his position on the mooring bitt so as to get his informant face to face, "what are you driving at? What do you mean, anyhow? Who's the owner of the cable boat that's willing to ship you as first mate and me as skipper? Is this a guy you are letting off on me, or is it delirium tremens? A cable boat! Why, what cable company is going to fish round promiscuous and pick up its officers from sweepings like you and me?"

"This is no company," replied Harman. "It's a private venture."

"To lay or to mend?"

"Well, if you ask me," said Harman, "I'd say it was more like a breaking job. If you ask me, I wouldn't swear to it being an upside business, but it's a hundred dollars a month for the skipper and a bonus of two thousand dollars if the job's pulled off, and half that for the mate."

The Captain whistled.

The darkness in this business revealed by Billy Harman jumped up at him; so did the two thousand dollars bonus and the hundred a month pay.

"Who asked you to come into this?" said he.

"A chap named Shiner," replied Harman.

"A Jew?"

"A German. I don't know whether he is a Jew or not, but he's got the splosh."

"Look here," said the Captain, half resuming his place on the mooring bitt with one leg dangling, "let's come to common sense. To begin with, you can't run a cable boat with a skipper and a mate and even a couple of engineers alone. You want an electrician.

Where's your electrician to come from?"

"You don't want no electricians to cut cables with," said Harman.

"That's true," said the Captain, falling into meditation.

"Yet, all the same," went on Harman, "this chap Shiner said we would want an electrician, and that he'd come as electrician himself. Says he has a good knowledge of the work."

"Oh, he said that, did he?"

"Yes, and I guess he told no lie. This chap Shiner is no bar bummer by a long chalk. I reckon he's all there."

The Captain made no reply. He was thinking. At first he had fancied this to be a simple business; some rascal person or syndicate wishing to cut a deep-sea cable and so interrupt communication between the business centers. There were only two or three Pacific cables where this piece of rascality could bring any fruitful results. That is to say, there were only two or three cables the cutting of which would not have been negatived by collateral cables or wireless, and the simple cutting of those cables could not conceivably produce a financial result worth the risk and the cost of an expedition.

But this was evidently more than a simple cutting job, since the presence of an electrician was required.

"Look here," said he, "where is this man Shiner to be seen?"

"Why," said Harman, "he's to be seen easy enough in his office on Market Street."

"Well, let's go and have a look at him," said the Captain, detaching himself from the mooring bitt. "He's worth investigating. Would he be in now, think you?"

"He might," replied Harman. "Anyhow, we can try."

They walked away together.

Harman, unlike Blood, was a typical sailor of the tramp school, a man who knew more about steam winches and cargo handling than masts and yards. He was all right to look at, a stocky man with a not unpleasant face, a daring eye, and a fresh color, but his certificates were not to match. Drink had been this gentleman's ruin. Had he been a lesser man, drink would have crushed him down into the fo'c'sle. As it was, he managed to get along somehow by his wits. He had not made a voyage for two years now, but he had managed to make a living. He was in with a number of men, crumps, shysters, dubious shipowners, publicans, and all sorts of sinners.

The public life of Frisco, like a rotten cheese, supports all sorts of mites and maggots, and the wharf edge is of all cheese the most rotten part.

Harman could put his hand on men to vote at a city election, or men to man a whaler; he was under political protection, he was in with the port officers and the customs, and he could have been a very considerable person despite his lack of education but for the drink. Drink is fatal to successful scoundrelism, and the form in which it afflicted Harman is the most fatal of all, for he was not a consistent toper. He would go sober for months on end, and then, having made some money and some success, he would "fly out."

Having reached Market Street, Harman led his companion into a big building where an elevator whisked them up to the fifth floor.

Here, at the end of a concrete passage, Harman pushed open a door inscribed with the legend "The Wolff Syndicate," and, entering an outer office, inquired for Mr. Shiner. They were shown into a comfortably furnished room where at a roll-top desk a young man was seated busily at work with a stenographer at his side. He asked them to be seated, finished the few words he had to dictate, and then, having dismissed the stenographer, turned to Harman.

Shiner, for it was he, was a very glossy individual, immaculately dressed in a frock coat, broad-striped trousers, spats, and patent-leather shoes.

He did not look more than thirty—if that—he was good looking, and yet a frankly ugly man would have produced a more pleasing impression on the mind than Mr. Shiner. Despite his good looks, his youth, and his manner which was intended to please, there was something inexpressibly hard and negative about this individual.

The Captain felt it at once. "Now, there's a chap that would do you in and sit on your corpse and eat sandwiches," said he to himself, "and smile —wonder how Harman got a hold of a chap like that? But there's money here; the place smells of it, and the chap, too. Well, we'll see."

"This is the Captain," said Harman. "Captain Blood I spoke of to you. I happened to meet him, and he's come in to see you."

"Very glad to see you, Captain," said Shiner, getting up and standing with his back to the stove. "Has our friend Harman mentioned to you anything of the business I spoke of to him?"

"He told me it was cable work," replied Blood cautiously.

"Just so," said Shiner. "I want a skipper for some work in connection with deep-sea cables. You have experience, I suppose?"

"Two years in the *Grapnel*," replied Blood.

"You were skipper?"

"No; first officer."

"Had you much to do with the cable work?"

"Everything, as far as handling the cable. You see, in some companies and some boats they have a regular cable engineer, a chap who doesn't touch any work but cable work; in others, the chief officer does his work and the cable work as well."

"I know," replied Shiner, nodding his head as though he were well acquainted with all the ins and outs of the business. "Well, in this affair of ours the skipper would be skipper and cable engineer as well. That would not interfere with his proper business, since once the cable engineer is in charge, he is the virtual captain of the ship."

Blood nodded, wondering how this up-to-date-looking young business man had gained so much knowledge about this special branch of seamanship.

"Of course you have certificates," went on Shiner. "You can show a clean sheet for character and ability?"

"Curse his impudence!" thought the Captain to himself; then, aloud: "A clean sheet? No, can you?"

Shiner, who had been standing on his toes and letting himself down on his heels, puffing out his chest, shooting his cuffs, and otherwise conducting himself like a man in power and on a pedestal, collapsed at this dig. He flung his right elbow into the palm of his left hand, pinched in his cheeks with his right thumb and forefinger, coughed, frowned, and then said:

"I can excuse a sailor for being short in his temper before a question that would seem to imply incapacity. We will say no more on that point. I take your word that you are an efficient navigator and a capable cable engineer."

"You needn't take anything of the sort," said Blood. "I'm a bad navigator, and, as for cable engineering, I can find a cable if I have a chart of it and howk her out of the mud if I have a grapnel. I don't say that doesn't want doing; still that's my limit as a cable man. And as to navigation, I can just carry on. I've lost two ships."

"The *Averna* and the *Trojan*," said Shiner.

"Now, how in the nation did you know that?" cried the outraged Blood.

"I know most things about most men in Frisco," replied the subtle Shiner.

"Well, then, you'll know my back,"

replied Blood, rising from his chair, "and you may think yourself lucky if you don't know my boot!" He turned to the door.

"Captain! Captain!" cried Harman, springing up. "Don't take on so for nothing. The gentleman didn't mean nothing. Don't you, now, be a fool, for it's me you'll put out of a job as well as yourself."

"What made him ask me those questions, then, and he knowing my record all the time?" cried Blood, around whose body Harman had flung an arm.

"He didn't mean no *harm*; he didn't mean no *harm*. Don't you be carrying on so for nothing; the gentleman didn't mean no harm. Here, now, sit you down; he didn't mean no harm."

Harman was not an orator, but his profound common sense prevented him from enlarging on the subject and trying to suggest innocent things that Shiner might have meant. Blood was in a condition of mind to snap at anything, but he sat down.

Shiner had said not one word.

"That's right," said Harman, in a soothing voice. "And now, Mr. Shiner, if I'm not wrong, it was a hundred dollars a month you were offering the Captain, with a bonus of a thousand when the job's through. Maybe I'm not mistaken in what I say."

"Not a bit," said Shiner, speaking as calmly as though no unpleasant incident had occurred. "Those are the terms, with an advance of a hundred dollars should the Captain engage himself to us."

"What about the victuals," said the Captain, seeming to forget his late emotion, "and the drinks?"

"The food will be good," replied Shiner, "and the best guarantee of that will be the fact that I go with you myself as electrician. I'm not the man to condemn myself to bad food for the sake of a few dollars. The food will be the best you have ever had on board ship, I suspect; but there will be no drinks."

"No drinks?"

"Not till we are paid off. This business wants cool hands. Tea, coffee, mineral waters you will have as much as you want of; but not one drop of alcohol. I am condemning myself as well as you, so there is no room for grumbling."

Harman heaved a sigh like the sigh of a porpoise. Blood was silent for a moment. Then he said: "Well, I don't mind. I'm not set on alcohol. If it's to be a teetotal ship, maybe it's all the better; but I reckon you'll pay wind money all the same."

"What's this they allow?" asked Shiner, as though he had forgotten this point.

"A shilling a day on the English ships," said the Captain, "for the officers. Eighteen pence, some of the companies make it. I don't know what the skipper gets. I reckon double. I'll take half a dollar a day. That's about fair."

"Very well," said Shiner. "I meet you. Anything more?"

"No," said the Captain. "I guess that's all."

"When can you start?" asked Shiner.

"When you're ready."

"Well, that will be about this day week."

"And the advance?"

"I will pay you that to-morrow, when you have seen over the ship. It's just as well you should have a look at her first. Can you be here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, I can be here."

"Very well, then. You had better come, too, Mr. Harman. I will expect you both at ten o'clock sharp. Good day to you."

They went out.

Going down in the elevator, they said nothing.

It will have been noticed that not one of the three men had made any remark

on the real nature of the forthcoming expedition. It was admittedly dark. The amount of pay and the bonus were quite enough to throw light on the edges of the affair. Blood did not want to explore farther. It wasn't the first dark job he'd been on, and the less he knew the more easily could he swear to innocence in case of capture.

Harman seemed of this way of thinking also, for, when they turned into the street, all he said was:

"Well, come and have a drink."

"I don't mind," said Blood. "I'm not a drinking man, as a rule; but that chap has made me feel dry somehow or another."

He had taken a black dislike to Shiner.

CHAPTER II.

THE "PENGUIN."

Near the docks where the China boats come in, there lies an old wharf gone pretty much to decay. Rafferty's Wharf is the name it goes by. It bears about the same relationship to the modern sea front that Monterey bears to San Francisco, for its rotten piles, bored by sea weevils and waving their weeds languidly to the green water that washes them, were young in the days when grain went aboard ship by the sackful and the tank ships of the Standard Oil Company were floating only in the undreamed-of future.

If you hunt for it, you will find it very difficult to discover; and if you discover it, you will gain little by your discovery but melancholy.

The great grain elevators pouring their rivers of wheat into the holds of the great grain freighters overshadow it with their majesty, and go as often as you will, there is never a decent, live ship moored to its bitts.

The cripples of the sea are brought here for a rest, or for sale, before starting with a last kick of their propellers for the breaking-up yards; and here, on this bright morning, when Mr. Shiner and his two seafaring companions appeared on the scene, this veritable cripple home only showed two inmates—a brig and a gray-painted, single-funneled steamship with rust runnings staining her paint, verdigris on her brasswork, no boats at her davits, and a general air of neglect, slovenliness, and disreputability beggaring description.

The *Penguin* had never been a beauty to look at, and she had always been a beast to roll; even rolling plates, though they had improved her a bit, had not cured her. She had only one good point—speed—and that was an accident; she had not been built for speed; she had been built to carry cable and to lay it and mend it; speed had come to her by that law which rules that to every ship built comes some quality or defect not reckoned for by the designer and builder.

Shiner & Co., having hailed the watchmen, crossed the gangplank to the desolate deck, the Captain with frank disapproval on his face, Harman sniffing and trying to look cheerful at the same time, like a salesman keeping a fair face above the rotten game he is offering for sale.

"Great Neptune!" said the Captain, glancing around him.

"She is a bit gone to neglect," said Shiner, "but it's all on the surface. She's as sound as a bell where it really matters."

"Them funnel guys," said Harman.

"Yes, they want tightening, and the want of boats doesn't make her look any better; but boats will be supplied according to regulation. You won't know her when I've had half a dozen fellows at her for a couple of days. All that brasswork wants doing, and a lick of paint will liven her up; but she's not a yacht, anyhow, and a sound deck under

one's feet is a long way better than a good appearance."

He followed the Captain, who had walked forward to the bow, where the picking-up gear cumbered the deck.

This consisted of a huge drum moved by cogwheels and worked through the picking-up engine by steam from the main boilers. On it would be wound the grapnel rope used for grappling for cable over the wheel let into the bow just at the point where in ordinary ships the heel of the bowsprit is grasped by the knightheads.

The Captain inspected this machine with attention, pressing on the cogs of the driving wheel with his thumb as though they were soft and he wished to discover how much they would dent; then, standing off a bit, he looked at it with his head on one side, as a knowing purchaser might look at a horse.

"Wants a drop of lubricating oil," said Shiner tentatively.

"Gallons," replied the Captain. He turned to the picking-up engine and pulled the lever over. This he did several times, releasing it and then pulling it over again as if for the gloomy pleasure of feeling its defects.

"Well," said Shiner, "what do you think of the gear and engine?"

"Oh, they'll work," said the Captain, "but it will be a good job if they don't work off their bedplates."

"They'll hold tight enough," said Harman, pressing his foot on the brake of the engine. "There's nothing wrong with them on the inside. Let's have a look at the main."

They came aft past the electrical testing room, and passed down the companionway to the engine room.

Here things were brighter, the weather having worked no effect.

"I have had them examined by an expert," said Shiner. "He gave them an A-1 certificate. And the boilers are sound; they have been scaled and cleaned. Let's go and look at the saloon."

They came on deck, and Shiner led the way down the companionway to the saloon.

It was a big place, with a table running down the middle capable of seating twenty or thirty at a crush. Cabin doors opened on either side of it; at the stern end it bayed out into a lounge and a couch upholstered in red velvet; and at the end, by the door leading to the companionway, was fixed a huge sideboard with a mirror backing.

A faint air of old festivity and an odor of must and mildew lent their melancholy to the dim, irreligious light streaming down through the dirty skylight.

The Captain sniffed. Then he peeped into the cabins on either side, noticed the cockroaches that made hussar rushes for shelter, the fact that the doors stuck in their jambs, that the bunks were destitute of bedding, and the scuttles of the portholes sealed tight with verdigris.

"You can have the starboard cabin by the door," said Shiner. "I'll take the port. Or you can take the chart room; there's a bunk there. Harman can have any of the other cabins he likes. We'll all mess here, and we won't grumble at being tightly packed."

"You'll have decent bedding put in?" said the Captain.

"That will be done, all right," replied Shiner. "You need have no fear at all that the appointments won't be up to date. There won't be frills on the sheets, but there will be comfort."

"Well, comfort is all I ask," replied the Captain. "And you propose to put out this day week?"

"This day week. May I take it, now, that everything is settled?"

The Captain scratched his head for a moment, as if dislodging a last objection. Then he said:

"I'll come."

CHAPTER III.

THE TOP SEAT AT THE TABLE.

It was on a Tuesday morning that they started. Blood came on board at six, and found the majority of the crew already assembled under Harman. They had come on board the night before, and, to use his own expression, they were the roughest, toughest crowd he had ever seen collected on one deck.

He was just the man to handle them, and his first act was to boot a fellow off the bridge steps where he had taken his perch, pipe in mouth, and send him flying down the alleyway forward. Then, following him, he began to talk to the hands, sending them flying this way and that, some to clean brasswork and others to clear the raffle off the decks.

Down below, the boilers were beginning to rumble, and now appeared at the engine-room hatch a new figure on the top part of one like a Scotch terrier poking up its head to have a look round.

It was MacBean, the chief, second, third, and fourth engineer in one.

MacBean had the honest look of a Dandie Dinmont, and something of the facial expression. He was an efficient engineer; he was on board the *Penguin* because he could not get another job, and that fact was not a certificate of character. There was scarcely a soul on board the *Penguin,* indeed, with the exception of Shiner, who would not have been somewhere else but for circumstances over which they had no control.

The Captain gave MacBean good morning, had a moment's talk with him, and then went aft to see how things were going there.

He found that a steward had been installed, and that he was in the act of laying breakfast things at one end of the breakfast table.

The Captain sent him up for his gear which was on deck, ordered him to place it in the cabin which he had selected, and then proceeded to change from the serge suit which he wore into an old uniform dating from his last command in the Black Bird line.

As he was finishing his toilet, he heard Shiner's voice, and when he came out of his cabin he found Shiner and Harman seated at table and the steward serving breakfast.

Shiner had gotten himself up for the sea. He looked as though he were off for some cheap trip with a brass band in attendance. Very few people can bear yachting rig, especially when it is brand-new; and brass buttons with anchors on them are as trying to a man's gentility as mauve to a woman's complexion.

The Captain gave the others good morning. Two things gratified him: the sight of the good breakfast spread upon the table, and the fact that the chair at the head of the table was vacant and evidently reserved for him.

He was about to take his seat when Shiner stopped him.

"Excuse me," said he, "but that is Mr. Wolff's place."

"Mr. Wolff's place?" said Blood. "And who the deuce is Mr. Wolff?"

"Our senior partner," said Shiner. "I'm expecting him every minute."

Then it was that the Captain noticed a cover laid beside Harman and evidently intended for him.

The temper of the man was not intended by nature to take calmly an incident like this.

The steward was listening, too.

"I'll give you to understand right away and here, now," said he, "that I'm the skipper of this tub, and that this is my place at the table. It's as well to begin as we intend to go on. Steward, look alive there with the coffee."

He took his seat at the head of the table, helped himself to eggs and bacon,

and turned his conversation on Harman. Shiner flushed, hesitated, lost his balance, and subsided into his coffee cup. The Captain at a stroke had taken his position among the after guard. Wolff might own the ship, and Shiner, too, it did not matter in the least. The Captain was boss, and would remain so.

In a moment, when he had finished saying what he had to say to Harman, he turned to the other.

"Of course," said he, "I can't stop you bringing all the supercargoes you like on board——" He stopped, told the steward to clear out of the saloon, and then, when the man had disappeared, went on: "Considering I've let myself in for this thing with my eyes shut, I've no right to complain if you brought bears on board, to say nothing of wolves; but I'd have taken it kinder if you had let me know right off at the beginning that the whole firm was going on the cruise."

"Look here, Captain," said Shiner, "you have spoken truth without knowing it. Wolff is the whole firm practically. He's the boss of this business, to all intents and purposes; he's the money behind it all, and the brain, and he did not want to advertise the fact that he was coming on board, I suppose, for he is a man pretty well known in the States. Anyhow, there are the facts. Wolff is a man that *I* don't mind playing second fiddle to; and if I don't mind, I don't see why you should."

"Oh, don't you?" said the Captain. "Well, I do. I'm captain of this tub, and captain I'll remain. I'm risking enough for a hundred dollars a month and a bonus of a thousand if this piracy, whatever it is, of yours, comes off, without losing my status quo as well."

"What's that?" asked the illiterate Harman, who had laid down the knife with which he had been eating so as to attend better to the dispute.

"It's what you'll never have—the position of a master mariner and the top seat at the table."

"What do you mean by that word 'piracy'?" asked Shiner, with the air of a woman whose reputation is attacked. "There is no such thing in this business, and it would be a lot better for you to be more careful with your words. Words are dangerous weapons when flung about like that."

"Well," said the Captain, "call it what you like. I don't know what it is, but I've signed on, and I'm not the man to go back on my word; but, as I just said, I don't know what we are after, and I don't much care, as long as we steer clear of the gallows."

"Don't be talking like that," said Harman. "Mr. Shiner, here, ain't such a fool as to go within smellin' distance of any hanging matter. What we are after may be a bit off color, but it's a business venture in the main. I've asked no questions, but Mr. Shiner has given me to understand that it was business he was after, not anything that would lay us by the heels, so to speak, in any killing matter."

"What we are after is perfectly plain," said Shiner. "Killing! Who talked of killing? This is, just as you say, a business matter, and it's no worse than what's being done in Frisco every day, only it's a bit more adventurous."

The precious trio finished their breakfast without any more words, and then went on deck. They had scarcely reached it when across the gangplank came a stout, black-bearded individual followed by a couple of wharf rats, one bearing luggage, the other two big cases.

This was Wolff.

Shiner introduced him to the Captain, and then Wolff, followed by the luggage and the cases, disappeared below.

"He's not a good sailor," said Shiner, "but he'll be all right after a day or two. Ah, here come the port authorities. I'll have a talk with them. You are all right for starting, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the Captain. "I'm ready to cast off when you are."

"Right!" said Shiner.

He took the port officers down to the saloon, and when they came up again they were all smoking half-dollar perfectos and the traces of conviviality and good-fellowship were evident.

"They've been having drinks," said Harman to himself. "Wouldn't wonder if there was lush in those cases Wolff brought aboard. No tellin'."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SAILING OF THE "PENGUIN."

It was noon when the hawsers were cast off and Captain Blood, in all the glory of command, standing on the bridge, rang up the engines and put the telegraph to half speed ahead.

It was a glorious day, not a cloud in the sky, and scarcely a ripple of breeze on the water. The breeze, just sufficient to shake the trade flags of the shipping, brought with it the whistling of ferryboats, the hammering of boiler iron from the shipyards, and a thousand voices from the multitude of ships.

They nearly scraped the stern wheel off a Stockton river boat, and then, as if sheering off from the blasphemy of the Stocktonites, nosed round and passed the buoy that marks the shoal water west of Hennessy's Wharf. Then down the bay they went with the sunlight on Alcatraz and the Contre Costa shore, and away ahead the Golden Gate and a vision of the blue Pacific.

They passed Sime Point and took the middle channel, where the first heave of the outer sea striding over the bar met them with a keener touch of wind to back it. The Cliff House and Point Bonita fell astern, and now, right ahead, the Farallons sketched themselves away across the lonely blue of the sea.

The *Penguin*, bow on to the swell, was behaving admirably, so well, indeed, that Wolff, with a cigar in his mouth, had appeared on deck and climbed onto the bridge. But now, clear of the land and with a shift of helm, the beam sea produced its effect, and her rolling capacities became evident.

Wolff descended, leaving the bridge to its lawful occupants, and even Shiner, who had taken his place on the after gratings with an account book and stylograph pen, retired after a very little while.

The *Penguin* was built to hold a thousand miles of cable in her fore end and after tanks, and, loaded like that, the effect of her top-hamper in the way of picking-up gear, picking-up engine, derricks, and buoys would be corrected. But she had no cable in her now, only water ballast, and she rolled after her natural bent, and rolled and rolled till cries of "Steward!" came faintly through the saloon hatch, followed by other sounds and the clinking of basins.

Blood walked the bridge with Harman, casting now and then an eye at the compass card and the fellow at the wheel, and now and then an eye at the forward deck lumbered with the gear and four or five new-painted buoys, each numbered and each with a lamp socket.

"They haven't spared expense in fitting her out," said Harman.

"No, they haven't," replied the Captain. "And why? Simply because I've been at Shiner all the past week with a rope's end, so to say. I'm blessed if the blighter didn't want to economize on buoys! 'Two will be enough,' says he, 'it's only a short job we are on, and they are three hundred dollars apiece.' He said that right to my face. 'Well,' said I, 'it's none of my business, but if you want to drop the job, whatever it is, in the middle, and run a thousand miles to the nearest port for a ten-cent buoy, you'll find your ecomony has been misplaced. You will that.' So he caved in on the buoys. Then we had

an argument over the grapnel rope. He wanted to take two miles of all hemp. I wanted five miles of wire wove. I got it, but only after a mighty tough struggle. The grapnels are good, but they went with the ship, and they'd been properly laid up in paraffin; not a speck on them. Then the Kelvin sounder was out of order. Yes, they'd have sailed with it like that only for me, and it cost them something to have it put right."

"What I'm thinking," said Harman, "is that this expedition is costing a good deal of money."

"It's costing all of five hundred dollars a day."

"What I'm thinking," went on Harman, "is that the profits to come out of whatever they are going to do must be huge, big profits to cover the expenses, and I've taken notice that when chaps are ketched going on the crooked where money is concerned, they always get a bigger doing from the law the bigger the money is. It's this way: if a chap nails a suit of clothes, or a ham, he don't get as much as a chap that nicks a motor boat, shall we say, and the chap that nicks a motor boat don't——"

"Oh, shut up!" said the Captain. "We're in for it, whatever it is, and our only hope's our innocence if we're caught. We don't know anything; we are only obeying the orders of the owners. Not that that will have much weight if we are caught, but we're not going to be. I've a firm belief in that slippery eel of a Shiner, much as I dislike him; and this chap Wolff doesn't seem a fool, either. They're not the sort of fellows to run their skins into much danger."

"What do you think it is?" asked Harman.

"Think what is?"

"This game of theirs."

"Well, I'll tell you what I think. I think they are going to pick up a cable, cut it, and tap it."

"Whatcha mean by tapping it?"

"Sucking the news out of it. Or maybe they're going to use it for sending some lying message that'll upset the stock markets, or grain markets, or railway people. Lord bless you, there's a hundred things to be done if one has the business end of a real deep-sea cable with a big city like Frisco or maybe Sydney at the other end."

"Well, maybe there is," said Harman. "There's a good many things to be done in Frisco off the square, without a cable, and there's no sayin' what mightn't be done with one."

"I reckon you're a judge of that," laughed the Captain.

"Oh, I'm pretty well up to the tricks of Frisco," said the other complacently. "But this is a new traverse, fooling folk from the middle of the ocean, one might say. I reckon Wolff is a German, ain't he?"

"Yes, he's a Dutchman, all right; so's Shiner, I reckon. German Jew. It lands me how those sort of chaps get on and make money, and the likes of us has to take their orders and their leavings. I'd like to get even with them once."

"Well, maybe you will," said Harman.

The Captain grunted.

There was a fellow on board named Bowers. He had been given the post of bos'n, and he knew something of navigation and could keep a watch on the bridge.

The Captain called for him now and gave the bridge over to him, as all was plain sailing with the California coast away on the port quarter, the Farallons on the starboard bow, and the whole blue Pacific Ocean right ahead.

He and Harman, leaving the bridge, sought the chart room and went in there for a smoke. It was a pleasant place, full of light, and with a couch running along one side. By the door stood a

rack of rifles, eight in number, and for every rifle a cutlass.

Cable ships go armed. They never know, when they leave port to do a job, what new job may not suddenly call them to the Patagonian beaches or the fogs of the Yellow Sea. The rifles and cutlasses were part of the fixtures belonging to the *Penguin* and taken over by the new owners, just as fixtures are taken over with a house. To use them for their proper purpose could never have occurred to the minds of Shiner, Wolff & Co. They were not men of violence. The strange thing, indeed, about this expedition, organized and manned for lawless work on the deep sea, was the fact that the chiefs were, to use Harman's phrase, "sure-enough city men," and that they were even now down below dead sick with the Pacific's first fringe of swell.

Harman took a rifle down and examined it, while Blood, extending his leg on the couch, lit a pipe.

"Say," said Harman, "are you any good as a shot?"

"Not with a thing like that," replied the Captain. "I can hit a man with a revolver at ten paces, and that's all the good shooting I want. Put that thing down and don't be fooling with it."

"It's not loaded," replied Harman, who had opened the breech.

"And it's not likely to be," replied the other, "for there's no ammunition on board and no need for it. If we're caught, there must be no fighting."

"Why, I thought you was a fighting man," said Harman, putting the rifle back. "You have the name for it."

"And so I am, when fighting is to be had on the square; but there's fighting and fighting. Can't you see, if we were caught tinkering at some cable we had no right to be meddling with, and if we were chased by some gunboat, and if we were to fight and draw blood —can't you see we'd be hanged without benefit of clergy? No, I never fight against the law. Never have and never will."

"Suppose a cruiser overhauled her when we was at work?" said Harman.

"Well, what's easier to say than that we were sent to mend? We are a sure-enough cable ship, and how's a cruiser to know whether the cable we are fishing for or tinkering with isn't broken? Oh, no; you may make your mind easy on that. Our position is sound and safe, on the outside. Inside it's as rotten as punk."

CHAPTER V.

THE CABLE MESSAGE.

The *Penguin,* steering a sou-sou'westerly course, slipped day by day into warmer and bluer seas. Wolff, recovering from his first unpleasantness, appeared on deck, cigar in mouth; and Shiner, with nothing better to do, would be seen lounging on the after gratings with a novel in his hand.

The Captain and Harman worked the ship, and had little to do with the others, meeting them chiefly at table, where, needless to say, the Captain took the head. Wolff had given him a chart of the Pacific whereon was laid down the exact position of the cable they were going to attend to.

"This is the chart," Wolff had said. "You will see, there is the cable. It is plainly marked. I wish you to bring us to it about here." He made a pencil mark on the cable line. "And when you have brought us to that point, then I will explain to you the object of this expedition."

"Right!" said the Captain.

They were steering now for the cable line through days of sapphire and nights wonderful with stars. Now and then they would raise an island, a peak with a turban of clouds, or an atoll, just a green ring of palms and breadfruits surrounded by a white ring of foam, and peak and atoll would heave in sight

and sink from sight with nothing to tell of the legerdemain at work but the pounding of the screw and the throb of the engines.

Sometimes a sail would heave in sight, or the far-off smoke of a steamer hold the imagination for an hour or two, and then be painted out, leaving nothing but the sea, the sky, and the pearl-white trace of cloud draping the skirts of the warm trade wind.

There is no place in the world where grievances sprout so well and grow so rapidly as on board ship. The Captain had a grievance. It had come to his knowledge that Wolff had a private stock of Pilsener. Some had come in the cases that the wharf rat had carried after him on board, and there was more stowed away in some hole known only to Wolff and Shiner.

Those two worthies would forgather of a morning in Wolff's cabin and drink Pilsener and then heave the bottles out of the porthole. The Captain had seen a Pilsener bottle going aft, bobbing and bowing to him in the wake, and his fury was excessive and ill contained.

Leaving aside the meanness of proclaiming the ship teetotal and then smuggling drink aboard for private consumption, there was something of cold-blooded inhospitality about the business that struck at the Irish heart.

He was very explicit about the matter to Harman:

"Swine—they and their lager beer! You wait! I'll pay them out."

"To think of them sitting there drinking, and we dry!" said the simple-minded Harman. "That's what gets me. We dry and them chaps drinking. It makes me thirsty. I don't care a dash about their sitting there and drinking, but when I think of it it makes me thirsty. That's what gets me."

"Well, you'll have to think of something else," said the Captain. "There's no use in dwelling on things like that, and the voyage is not for long."

"It's long enough to be without a drink in," said Harman.

Harman, despite his up-to-dateness on San Francisco roguery, was a most extraordinary child for all his manhood. The man part of him had grown up and grown crooked; the child part of him had remained virginal. The moment was everything to him. He could just read and write his name, and sometimes, when he was off duty, you would see him spelling over a San Francisco paper. Houses to let, governesses wanted—it was all the same to him. He only read the advertisement columns. They satisfied his craving for literature, and he could understand them. The rest of the paper, from the poetry corner to the foreign-news column, was arid ground for him.

Yet this same man had made money out of ward politics and in twenty other ways in which one would have fancied education necessary to success.

They left Fanning and Christmas Island three hundred miles to starboard, passed the equator, and, entering the great, empty space of sea bounded by the Phœnix Islands on the north and the Peurhyms on the southeast, headed toward the Navigators.

One sweltering morning, the Captain, coming up to Wolff, who was seated in his pajamas under the double awning that had been rigged up, said:

"We're just on the cable line."

Wolff rose up, called for the steward, and, having sent for his panama, put it on and came up on the bridge.

The sea was smooth, surface smooth, but underrun by the long, endless swell of the Pacific.

"This is the spot," said the Captain, who had been poring over the cable chart which he had brought up on the bridge. "And it's pretty deep. All a mile."

"Good!" said Wolff. "With this calm sea, we ought to work well and quickly. We are in luck; and now, if you will

come into the chart house, we will talk for one moment."

They went into the chart house, and Wolff shut the door.

"This is a purely business proposition," began Wolff, "and I must tell you, to begin with, that it is not a business which a man of a certain type of mind would call on the square. But, my dear Captain, can you show me any business proposition that is truly on the square? Not one. I want the use of a cable, and I am going to take it for business purposes. That is all there is to it, you understand."

"Look here," said Blood, "this is all I know of the business. You want me to fish this cable up?"

"Precisely."

"Cut it?"

"Just so."

"Connect both ends with the electrical testing room, and let you talk through it and send messages through it from both or one of the cut ends?"

"That is exactly the position."

"Well, after that?"

"After I have had my use of the cable, you can drop both ends overboard. We will sail away, and no one the wiser. Of course, the cable company will recognize that their cable is broken, and send a ship to mend it; but we will be far away by that time."

"I see," went on the Captain, "that it runs from the American coast here to the Australian coast here, but I don't know the name of the company it belongs to; I don't know what in the nation your game is. I am as innocent as a baa lamb on the whole affair, and I simply obey your orders, not knowing that you yourself may not own the cable and that this mayn't be a repairing job. If we are caught, will you bear me out in that statement?—not that your evidence will be much good, I expect, but, still, it's better than nothing."

"If you obey our instructions," said Wolff, "I will do as you say; and, to prove that I am playing fair with you, I will even now give you a detail of the commercial speculation that is behind all this business."

"I don't want to hear it," said the Captain. "I'd much sooner remain innocent. I'm just an ordinary sailor signed on to do an ordinary job. I'll work freer in mind if I know nothing about the inside of the affair; it's black enough on the out."

"Well, we will leave it at that," said Wolff, "and we will now set to work, if you please."

They came on to the bridge, and the Captain gave orders for the main engines to be stopped and the Kelvin sounder to be set to work. The donkey man had been allotted to this job, and presently the furious, sewing-machine whir of the sounder hauling up the lead came through the silence that had supervened on the stopping of the engines, and the result was shouted forward: "Eight hundred fathoms, coral rock."

Blood, on this result being given to him, left the bridge and came down to the bow balks to superintend the lowering of the first buoy. He had not only to act as cable engineer, but he had also to instruct the hands in the details of this work absolutely new to them. A big, red-painted buoy was swung up against the burning blue of the sky, a rope with a mushroom anchor attached to it was fastened to the buoy; then the anchor was cast overboard, taking the rope with it, and the buoy, swung outboard, was dropped. It rode off, bobbing and ducking on the swell, and the *Penguin* steamed on to a point a mile ahead, where another buoy was dropped in a precisely similar manner.

The Captain had now his position and his marks laid down. Somewhere between those two buoys lay the cable, like a black snake on the floor of the sea, waiting to be grappled for.

The grapnel rope was now lowered

over the clanking drum of the picking-up gear and the wheel in the bow. This business took half an hour, and then the *Penguin,* going dead slow, began to steam back to the first-mark buoy, dragging the grapnel after her across the floor of the sea.

Wolff and Shiner took a great deal of interest in this part of the business. They stood at the bow watching the pointer of the dynamometer, which gave the pull on the rope in hundredweights; every lump of coral, every tuft of weed traveled over by the grapnel made the pointer of the dynamometer jump and joggle; and at every jump the idea "Cable!" would leap into the minds of the speculators and show itself in their eyes.

But the *Penguin* passed from one mark buoy to the other without a show of the real thing; and then she turned and steamed back on an equally fruitless course.

She was making ready for a third grapple when the bell went for dinner, and Wolff, Shiner, and the Captain turned aft and went below to the saloon.

The Wolff gang were in a bad temper, and the meal had scarcely begun when a discussion broke out.

"It's a funny thing," said Shiner, "that we have not hit the thing yet."

"We have been twice over the ground," said Wolff.

"Sure you haven't made a mistake in the spot, Captain?" said Shiner.

The Captain put down the glass of mineral water he was raising to his lips.

"Why can't you say what you mean?" said he. "Why can't you ask me right out if I haven't muddled the navigation and missed the job? Well, I haven't. Is that plain? Some men may doubt their own work, and there are some men who would be put off by suspicions flung at them and would say, 'Maybe I *am* wrong,' and pick up his buoys and move off to another ground and make fools of themselves. I'm not that sort. Can't you see that a cable may be passed over by a grapnel half a dozen times without the grapnel catching? It may be glued down with coral."

"Just so, just so!" said Shiner, anxious to pacify. "We never doubted your capacity, Captain."

"Never, I'm sure," said Wolff.

The Captain, somewhat mollified, went on with his meal, and he was raising the glass of mineral water for the second time to his lips when the dead, slow tramp of the engines ceased.

Immediately on their cessation, through the open skylight came the clanking sound of the picking-up gear, and right on that came Harman's voice, roaring down the saloon companion-way: "Below, there! We've got the cable!"

In a minute or less, Wolff, Shiner, and the Captain were in the bows; the Captain on the bow balks, Shiner and Wolff on the deck.

The great drum, rotating slowly, was hauling in the grapnel rope, dripping and taut; the dynamometer registered a strain of seven tons, and the strain was slowly increasing.

Nothing else could give this result but cable.

"Are you sure we have got it, Captain?" asked Wolff.

The Captain looked down at him.

"If that rope was to break under this strain," said he, "it would mushroom out like an open umbrella and cut you to pieces. Better get up on the bridge. You're safe there. Yes, I'm sure we've got cable, unless we've grappled a dead whale."

Wolff and Shiner went up the ladder to the bridge, and the Captain, relieved of their presence, continued his work.

It was worth watching.

He was a true-born cable man, and they are as rare as good violinists. Knowing the depth, and the length of rope out, and its weight in sea water,

and the weight of the grapnel, he could tell approximately what was going on down below; he knew that he was lifting heavier stuff than ordinary cable, and the weight could only come from coral incrustations on it. He knew that the cable must be glued down here and there, and that haste would mean a break. Sometimes he stopped the picking-up gear altogether and trusted to the rise and fall of the ship on the swell to break the thing gently up from its attachments. And still the grapnel rope came in, dripping and endless, till at last the grapnel itself appeared with what seemed the bight of a sea serpent gripped in its unholy claws.

The thing was crusted here and there with coral, it is true, but it was comparatively new and sound, and a genuine, straight-going cable man would have shuddered at the sacrilege that was going on. Even the Captain felt qualms. To cut this thing was like murder; it would mean a dead loss of ten or fifteen thousand dollars to the company that owned it. An expedition would have to be fitted out to repair it, and if bad weather were to come on, it might be three months before the repairs were effected.

The Captain thought of all this even as he was ordering the stoppers to be got ready and the sling for the man who would do the cutting. He drowned remorse in the recollection that the injury would be done to a company, not to an individual. He would not have injured an individual of his own free will for worlds, but he did not mind much injuring a company. A company was a many-headed beast, and, in his experience, it always dealt hardly with its employees.

The cable was high out of the water now, in the form of an inverted V, with the grapnel at the apex. He ordered each limb of the bight to be secured with a stopper, and then, unable to trust any one else with the delicate business, he himself descended in a sling to do the cutting. Shouting his directions to the fellows who were lowering him, he came just level with the grapnel and began the business with a file. Halfway through, he ordered the grapnel to be eased away, finished the business, and left the two cable ends hanging by the stoppers.

Then he came aboard, and the starboard end of the cable was hauled in. It did not take long to connect it up with the electrical testing room, where Shiner was already installed before the mirror galvanometer.

The end they had hauled on board was the American end; the testing-room door was shut, the blinds of the windows drawn, for a subdued light is necessary to the proper working of the mirror galvanometer; and Shiner and Wolff were left alone with the American continent to work their dark schemes.

Said Harman, as he paced the deck with the Captain:

"I wonder what those two guys are doin' now? Carryin' out some of their malpraxises, no doubt. I ain't a particular man, but this thing's beginnin' to get on my spine. It didn't seem much at the start, just foolin' with a cable; but now it seems somehow a durned sight worse, now that the thing's cut. I tell you, Cap, it went to my heart to see it cut. I couldn't 'a' felt worse if it'd squealed and blood run out of it. I guess I wouldn't have joined the expedition if I hadn't been tempted. I remember my old mother warning me that if sinners tempted me, not to consent."

"Confound you and your warnings!" said the Captain. "Who tempted me? You, and no one else. But I'm not the man to go back on you and talk about warnings. We're in for it, and there's no going back, and we can't do anything but pray that a cruiser doesn't heave in sight before we get away."

"Amen to that!" said Harman.

They continued pacing the deck in silence, till suddenly the testing room opened and Wolff appeared.

The black-bearded Wolff was ghastly white. He had the look of a man who had received a blow in the stomach. He held up a finger to the Captain, who came toward him.

"Come in here," said Wolff.

Shiner was off his stool and sitting on the couch that ran along the port side of the room. His hands were in his hair, and the dot of the mirror galvanometer was spilling from side to side of the scale unnoticed. Disaster was in the air.

"What's up?" asked the Captain.

"Up!" cried Shiner, coming out of his lair as one might fancy a cockatrice coming out of its hole. "Everything is up! Our speculation is done for! War has been declared."

"War been declared? What war?"

"England and Germany and France," replied Shiner.

"How did you hear it?"

"How did I hear it? Why, the first message I tapped was a Press Association special to Sydney. They began cursing me for having been held up for half an hour while we were cutting the cable. They thought we were Sydney. They don't know the cable is cut yet. They're still jabbering. Anyhow, there it is—war! And war spells ruin to the business we were on."

"We must cut losses," said Wolff, who was walking up and down. "The expedition is off. We must get to a Chile port at once—Valparaiso for choice."

"And my bonus?" said the Captain.

"I guess you may whistle for your bonus," said Shiner. "Can't you see we are bust—B-U-S-T?"

"But we can do one thing," said Wolff. "We can hit the cursed English; we can haul in twenty, forty miles of the cable and cut. The thing is cut, in any case; but a long break like that will make it the worse for them; then Sydney will have one cable the less to talk to her mother with. Yes, we can do that."

"Curse them!" said Shiner. "Yes, we can do that."

"So my bonus is gone?" said the Captain. "Well, may I ask one question of you: Who's fighting who? Is it France and England against Germany?"

"It is Germany against France and England," said Wolff.

"And you are Germans, and this is a German-owned vessel?"

"Precisely," said Wolff. "You have touched the matter on the head."

The Captain ruminated.

Then, said he: "Well, gentlemen, this is a serious matter for me. I lose my bonus, and I lose my pay, I expect; for if you are as badly broke as you say, when you land at Valparaiso or some southern port—and you daren't go back to Frisco—there'll be precious few dibs to go round unless you manage to sell the old *Penguin*, which isn't very likely in war time. Well, gentlemen, I've thought of a plan by which I may get my bonus, and my pay, too; and if you'll come down to the saloon with me, I'll show you it."

"Why not tell us here?" said Shiner.

"I cannot explain it here. Come down, gentlemen. When all's said and done, it won't take a minute, and there's a lot of importance attaching to what I have to explain to you. It's worth a minute."

He left the testing room, and they followed him to the saloon. He led the way into his cabin, and they followed him like lambs. He asked them to be seated on the couch opposite the bunk; then he took the key from the inside of the door and inserted it in the lock on the outside.

"What are you doing that for?" said Shiner.

"I'll show you in one minute," replied the Captain.

He stepped swiftly out into the saloon, banged the door to, and locked it.

It was Shiner who woke to the situation first, and it was Shiner's voice that came now as he clung to the handle of the door and punctuated his remarks with kicks on the paneling.

The Captain waited a moment till the other gave pause. Then he said:

"There's no use in kicking and squealing. You're prisoners of war, that's how you stand. The ship's mine now, a lawful prize. What's that you say? An Irishman? Of course I'm an Irishman. What's that you say? I'm a traitor to my country? B'gosh, if you say that again, I'll open the door and give you a taste of my quality. Say it again, will you! Say it again, will you!"

He shook the door handle at each invitation, but Shiner was dumb. He evidently had no desire to taste the Captain's quality. It was Wolff's voice that came instead, muted and murmurous:

"Make terms, make terms; there is no use in arguing. Make terms!"

"You won't make any terms with me," said the Captain, "but you'll be treated well and transshipped as quick as possible."

"But, see here, Captain!" came Shiner's voice.

The Captain did not hear him; he had left the saloon, and next moment was on deck. He was a man of swift decision, and he had fixed in his mind that the first thing to be done was to make the crew his own, and the next to dump the cable and be gone. He could not mend it. They had no skilled artificer on board. To mend it, he would have to bring both ends on board and connect them. If you have ever examined a deep-sea cable, with its water coat of wire, its inner coat of rubber, and its core, you will quite understand the complexity of the task.

It was impossible, and he recognized the fact as he walked forward.

Harman was standing by the dynamometer, waiting for orders, and the bos'n near Harman. The Captain ordered the bos'n to pipe the whole crew on deck, and presently, like a kicked beehive, the fo'c'sle gave up its contents, the stokers off duty appeared, and even MacBean himself rose like a seal from the engine-room hatch.

"Boys," said the Captain, addressing the dingy crowd, "is there ever a German among you?"

Dead silence for a moment, as though the hands were consulting their own hearts, and then a voice from back near the starboard alleyway: "No, there ain't no Germans here."

"Sam's a Dutchman," came another voice, and then the voice of Sam, protesting: "You lie! I vas a New Yorker."

"Shut your mouths!" said Blood. "I'm an Englishman, or pretty near the same thing, and I'm captain of this hooker, which is owned by a German firm. In other words, it is owned by Mr. Wolff and Mr. Shiner, who are Germans. Well, my lads, news has just come over that cable we have picked up that war has been declared between England and Germany, so I have taken possession of the ship in the name of England, d'ye see? Which means that there's lots of prize money for all of us if we can bring her safe into an English port."

He waited for a moment after this announcement, but not a sound came from the crowd in front of them. It was filtering down through the thickness of their intelligences. It was an entirely new proposition that he had laid before them, and required time to find a response. They knew—God help them!—as little as he did of the horrible problems of international and maritime law that the *Penguin* was about to wind round herself as the silkworm winds

a cocoon; but they knew the meaning of the word "money," and it didn't matter to them a rap whether it was prize money or not, as long as it could be changed for whisky and tobacco.

A little, wiry Nova Scotian was the first to respond.

"Go to it!" cried he. "Here's to England and a pocketful of money!" He flung up his cap, and the action touched the rest off. They cheered—Anglo-Saxons, Celts, Latins, and Slavs—for such was their mixture. All joined in the shout.

MacBean alone, cautious and cool, made any question.

"Are you sure," said he, when the shouting had ceased, "are you sure we're in the right of this? I'm as willin' as ony man to fight for England, but I'm no so sure about our poseetion as regards the ship."

"Well, you will be soon," said Blood. "This is my position: I'm not only going to take the ship, but I'm going to take anything German I come across on the high seas. Away back in the American Spanish War, I put out in a mud dredger from the Florida coast and took a mail steamer. We pretended we were a dynamite boat. There were seven thousand dollars in gold coin on board her, and we took it. Never mind where it went to——" A wild yell from the crowd. "We took it just as we are going to take any German money we come across. A chance like this doesn't come in most lifetimes, and I'm not going to lose it." Applause.

MacBean went back to his engine room.

"May I ax, Captain," said one of the fellows, "what's to become of the owners?"

"Meaning Mr. Wolff and Mr. Shiner?" replied the Captain. "Why, they are prisoners of war, and they will be treated as such without a hair of their heads being touched. But we can't keep them on board. We'll land them somewhere, or put them on a German ship, if we find one. Now, then, look lively and get the cable away. Mr. Harman, get it aft from the testing room, and then cast loose the stoppers; dump both ends."

He went on the bridge while Harman cast the cable loose; then he rang up the engines, and, giving the fellow at the wheel a sou'westerly course to steer by, put the engine telegraph to full speed ahead.

He wanted to get away from that spot in a hurry. He had not yet fixed on any point to make for—north, south, east, or west did not matter for the moment to him. He wanted to be somewhere else and to put as many long leagues as possible between the *Penguin* and the scene of her crime.

Harman presently joined him on the bridge.

Said Harman: "Well, this is a rum joke, ain't it, Captain? 'Pears to me it's the rummest joke ever I seen. We've took the ship, and we've took the owners—and how about our bonuses and pay?"

"We'll have to take the bonuses out of the first Dutchman we can lay hands on," said the Captain. "We'll never get a cent from Wolff and Shiner. Their game is up. If I can lay alongside of a German trader—and there are plenty in these waters—I'll take all she's got."

"And suppose they show fight?" said Harman.

"Traders don't fight—we have eight rifles—without ammunition, but that doesn't matter, for we'd only be spoofing. The sight of the rifles is enough. Still, I wouldn't mind fighting if we have to."

"I heard a chap yarning once," said Harman. "It was at a meetin' a fellow give me a ticket for, and this chap was sayin' there was no use in war; he was sayin' no one was any the better off for war, and all suchlike. Well, it 'pears to me it's a durned good thing,

for you can go and rob the chaps that's against you, and it's all on the square. I've all my life been wantin' to rob people open," continued Mr. Harman, "not poor people, you understand, for there wouldn't be no fun in that, and, besides, they have nothing worth takin' —but rich folk. Them's the chaps. My idea would be to be goin' round Nob Hill with a hand barrow and collecting jewelry, or callin' at the Bank of California with a cart and a shovel. I never expected in my life I'd have a chance like this."

"It's not all too rosy," said the Captain. "I'm not clear what a German cruiser could do to us if they found us skinning a German ship. I've heard that privateering is going to be allowed in the next war—which is this—but then we haven't a letter of marque."

"What's that?"

"A license to rob. But, license or no license, we can't pick and choose. We have to make good. We're done out of our bonuses and our salary. D'ye think I'm going back to Frisco as poor as I left it, and maybe poorer? For I'll tell you one thing, Billy Harman: What we've done to that cable is a penitentiary job to start with, and if it tricks America any over this war, supposing she takes a hand in it, it may mean a hanging job."

"I wish you'd not go on talkin' like that," said Harman. "What on earth's the use of going on talkin' like that? Who's to catch us?"

"I don't know," replied the captain. "The only one thing I do know is the bedrock fact that our position couldn't be worse than it is, and that we may as well play for as big a figure as possible. Between you and me, it's just this—piracy pure and simple; that's our game, under shelter of the pretense that we're English and doing all in our power to help our native land; then if we are caught by an English ship with our holds full of boodle and our scuppers full of gold all we have to say is: 'Please, sir, we have been fighting the Germans for the good of our native land.'"

"And suppose we are caught by a German ship?"

"Then it will be all the worse for us; but come along into the chart room, for I have an idea, and I want your opinion on it."

They left the bridge, and went into the chart room, where the captain, having closed the door, brought out a chart of the Pacific, placed it on the table, and sat down before it.

"Here we are," said he, making a pencil mark on the spot. "And here," making another mark, "lies Christobal."

"Why, Christoval Island lies in the Solomons," said Harman. "I've been there."

"I said Christobal, not Christoval. This is a German island, and a pretty rich one, too. I know it, and cause I have to know it, for a chap there named Sprengel let me down badly once over a deal. I hope he's there still. It's a rich island, lots of copra and trade. I'm going there."

"And what are you going to do there?" asked Harman.

"Well, you see," said the captain, "the place is only just a trading station; it's not armed; there are only half a dozen whites, and—I'm going to take it."

"Take it?"

"Hoist the Union Jack there, scoop all the boodle I can find, up anchor, and bunk for Valparaiso. That's my idea."

"Lord, that would be lovely!" said Harman. "But suppose they show any sort of fight?"

"Not they. We'll rig up a dummy gun, and we can arm a landing party with these blessed old rifles and cutlasses there. But the dummy guns will do them. You see, they won't know what to make of the cut of the *Penguin*. They'll never have seen a cable ship,

most likely. We'll tell them we are a volunteer cruiser. Good name, that."

A knock came to the door, and the bos'n appeared.

"Please, Captain," said that individual, "them guys you've locked up in the after cabin are tryin' to beat the door down and threat'nin' to fire the ship."

"I'll come and attend to them," said the Captain grimly. But first he went on the bridge and gave the helmsman the course for Christobal.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CREW'S SHARE OF THE SPOILS.

Next day they sighted a bark. She was English, and, to make up for his disappointment, the Captain had the pleasure of giving her news of war, and scaring her nearly to death with the false news of German cruisers in the vicinity.

The latter trick was played out of spite, owing to her refusal to relieve him of Wolff and Shiner—still in durance vile.

He had brought the *Penguin* to within megaphone distance of the bark—her name was the *Anne Page*—and when he made his request the answer came roaring back, quite definite:

"I won't take no German prisoners. I'm full up with pigs and copra; there ain't standin' room scarcely as it is, and we're short of water and grub."

"I'll supply you," cried the *Penguin*. "Lower a boat and you'll have what you want."

The *Anne Page* seemed to meditate a moment, and then again came the response like that of a deaf man who has failed to catch the meaning of what is said to him:

"I won't take no German prisoners. There ain't no room for them. Why don't you keep 'em yourself—you're big enough?"

On that the Captain gave his news of the German cruisers, and the *Anne Page* picked up her skirts and scuttled.

But next day they had better luck. They picked up a real German schooner, captained by a real Simon-pure German skipper, and eight of the scallawags of the *Penguin* had their first exercise under arms.

The *Penguin* carried a whaleboat for beach work—Wolff had strongly resented the purchase of this boat, but the captain had stood firm—and into it were bundled Wolff and Shiner, eight malefactors armed with cutlasses and rifles, followed by Blood himself.

The schooner—the *Spreewald* was her name—would have escaped, but there was only a five-knot breeze blowing, and the *Penguin* could make ten. There was also the threat of ramming. She let herself be boarded, received the declaration of war, and then submitted to be robbed.

The whole thing was shameful, and painfully like robbing a child of the milk it is carrying home. She was but a little ship, and the booty was trifling, some five hundred dollars, some barrels of Bismarck herrings, a dozen boxes of cigars, and a gold watch and chain. That is what Blood took from her. But she relieved him of the presence of Wolff and Shiner, and he reckoned that equal to a lot of plunder.

When they steered off they got five miles away before the *Spreewald* had fully recovered her senses from the outrage and pulled herself together. Then they saw her spreading her canvas and altering her course.

"She was bound for one of the English islands, I expect," said Blood, "and now she's nosing off for some German port of call. Well, I guess this is the first blood the English have drawn in these seas. I deserve a bonus on that."

The money he had in his pocket, also the gold watch and chain; the Bismarck herrings had gone to the lazaret, and the cigars to the saloon.

He was turning with Harman to go down and enjoy one when a little man with a red head came aft, touching his cap.

"Please, sir," said this individual, "I was sent by the crew to ax what their share in the liftin' is to be."

"Oh, you were, were you?" said the captain. "And a very natural question, too. I'll go forward and have a talk with them."

He found the men clustered round the picking-up gear.

"You sent to ask me what your share in the findings would be," said he, "so I thought I'd come and tell you by word of mouth. To begin with, what do you think yourselves on board of—a pirate? You'll just understand one thing: this ship is acting on the square; it's under command of a Britisher—that's me—and whatever we take rightfully belongs to the British government. But I can promise you this: Your money you signed on for will be paid when we reach Valparaiso, one third of all pickings will be divided among you, leaving two-thirds for Mr. Harman and me; and, after we coal at Valparaiso, I intend taking the hooker down to a port I know of and selling her. Half the money she brings will be divided among her crew, the other half between Mr. Harman and me."

"And the British government?" asked the bos'n.

"I'll settle with the British government," replied the captain, with a wink.

A roar of laughter went up.

The idea of doing the Germans and the British government at the same time appealed so much to these gentlemen that they forgot to consider over the terms for the division of the spoil or dispute them.

"And may I ax are we heading for Valparaiso now?" asked the red-headed man.

"No, we are not; we are heading for a little German island named Christobal."

"And what are we goin' to do there?" asked another of the crowd.

"We are going to collect all the money we can find for the British government."

Another howl of laughter.

"And suppose, when we're landed at this here island, a German ship comes along and asks us what we are doing?" spoke up a grumbler. "What'll us say to that?"

"Why, we'll say we're picking mushrooms," replied the captain. "Any more inquiries? Well, then, you can get to work. See here! I want half a dozen chaps to help me rig up a dummy gun on the bow balks. A stovepipe is good, but we haven't got one, so we must just use a big spar sawed down. There's a spare yard will do. I'll go and speak to Mr. Harman about it."

He turned off, and in the alleyway he met MacBean looking more serious and like a Scotch terrier than ever—an Aberdeen. He had been listening to every word.

"Mon, mon," said MacBean, "this is an awfu' business. Fiddlin' with the cable was bad, but this is shoockin', rank piracy, call it what names you will, and that I did not sign for."

"What made you sign on at all?" cried the Captain, flashing out.

"Drink," replied Mac. "The same that made Harman and half the crew sign on. Mon, this is an unholy ship, a drunk ship that has to keep sober, goin' about the ocean with hell in her heart; cable smashin' and pirating under the cover of a devastating war—and sober all the time."

"Jolly good job for you all you have to keep sober."

"I was not think' of the goodness or the badness of the job," said Mac. "It's the heepocrisy gets me."

"Well, if the Germans don't get you

as well you'll be lucky," replied the other, going aft.

He found Harman in the saloon sampling the cigars, and he gave him a sketch of what he had done and said to the crew.

"A lick of gray paint and an artificial bore, which you can burn out with a hot iron, and you can't tell a spar end from the nose of a four-inch gun," said he in conclusion.

"From the shore?" said Harman.

"Just so," replied the Captain. "You didn't fancy I was going to invite the blighters aboard to inspect our armaments, did you?"

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTOBAL.

Christobal Island lay two days' steaming away. It was a tiny place set all alone in the wastes of the sea.

There was only one trading station there, and it was run by a German on behalf of a German firm. This person's name was Sprengel, and, to use the words that Blood applied to him some years before the date of this story, he had everything of the Red Indian about him except the gentleman.

Sprengel was a Prussian, close-clipped, clever, hard, and persistent as the east wind that blows over East Prussia in the spring. He had managed to keep other traders away from Christobal Island. Trade was his god; he had one ideal only—money, and, with the Teutonic passion for alien slang, he declared that in Christobal he was the only pebble on the beach.

The place, though German, was free to all men, absolutely free, yet Sprengel kept it absolutely German. No one could compete with him. Other traders had tried, but their business had wilted; antagonistic influences had worked mysteriously against them.

Blood had brought a cargo of trade here once for a friend. The friend, Samson by name, had put his all into a little schooner and a cargo of all sorts of "notions"—canned salmon, gin, tobacco, prints, knives, et cetera. He had taken Blood along as skipper. Bad luck had followed them to several islands, and here at Christobal had finished them. Blood rightly had put down their failure to Sprengel, and the glorious idea of getting even with Sprengel now haunted him so that he could not sleep.

His one dread was that Sprengel, having made his pile, might have gone back to Bromberg to enjoy it.

They had finished the "gun" next day, and mounted it on the bow, with a tarpaulin over the breech as if to protect it from the weather, when the Captain, who had been superintending the operations, coming aft, discovered Harman emerging from the saloon companionway in a high state of excitement.

"I've found it," said Harman. "I knew it was there. I guessed the swine couldn't have finished the lot, so I set up a hunt for it. Come you down and see."

The Captain followed him below, and there, on the saloon table, he saw standing three bottles of Pilsener.

"Where did you get those?" said he.

"Get them! I got them out of the locker in Wolff's cabin; hid away they were behind some old newspapers. I guessed the pair of those chaps hadn't finished all the lush, and I hunted and hunted—first in Shiner's locker, then under the mattress in his lower bunk. I looked into Wolff's locker twiced, and saw nothin' but newspapers, and still I kep' on. I reckon I must have smelled the stuff to make me so persistent. Anyhow, I lit on the idea that the stuff might be hid behind the newspapers, and I went again, and there they were."

"Fetch some glasses," said the captain.

Harman darted off, and returned with two glasses and a corkscrew.

The Captain took the corkscrew, placed a bottle between his knees, and was on the point of inserting the screw into the cork, when he paused; stood up, and replaced the bottle and corkscrew on the table.

"What's the matter now?" asked Harman.

"An idea has struck me," replied the Captain.

"What's your idea?"

"We mustn't drink this stuff."

"Not drink it!" cried the outraged Harman. "And what on earth do you want it for if we ain't to drink it?"

"Bait," replied the other.

"Bait?"

"To catch Sprengel with. This is Lion brew Pilsener, and it's a hundred to one, if he's still on the island, he hasn't any of this stuff with him. There's no German born could withstand the temptation. It beats sausages."

"Well," said Harman, flying out like a child, "if I'd known you was going to collar the stuff like that I'd have drunk it before I called you. It ain't fair. Here am I with my tongue hangin' down to my heels for a drink, and there's the stuff and the glasses and all. I'm not given to complain, but it's too much. I'm speakin' my mind now. It's too much!"

"Can't you understand that with this stuff I may be able to get the blighter on board," said the Captain, "and if I once get him on board and down to this saloon the whole of the rest of the thing will be easy. If we try to rush the place with him on shore there may be blood spilled. With him a prisoner here there won't be any resistance."

"I'll take him those three bottles as a present, and then invite him on board with the promise of a case of it—d'ye see?"

"I'll tell you what," said Harman. "I'll split the difference with you. Take him two bottles as a present, and we'll drink the other."

The Captain considered on this for a moment, and then, fearing mutiny as well as having a thirst, he gave in.

It was his first drink for a long time, and it was excellent beer; the only drawback was the quantity.

"What I can't see," said Harman, finishing his portion of the liquid, "is what in the nation you want treatin' the perisher to two bottles of this stuff; two bottles is too little to take ashore with you as a present, and it's one too many if you're just going to offer him a drink after he's caught."

The Captain joined issue, and the argument went on till thirst joined with Harman, and the Captain gave in. The second bottle was opened.

And now a strange thing happened. No sooner had the contents of the second bottle vanished than the Captain himself prepared to finish the business.

It was the Irishman coming out.

"There's no use in one bottle," said he, "and, for the matter of that, I can get him aboard on the promise of beer. How's he to know there is none?"

Harman actually protested—feebly enough, it is true—yet he protested, holding out his glass at the same time. There was a Scotch strain in Harman.

When they had finished, they filled the bottles with water and recorked them.

"They're just as good like that," said the captain, "for Sprengel."

CHAPTER VIII.

SPRENGEL.

At seven o'clock next morning Christobal showed up on the far horizon, and by ten o'clock the *Penguin* was heading for the anchorage, with the Captain on the bridge and Harman beside him.

It was a lovely island.

A broken reef protected the beach from the full force of the sea, and the cliffs showed green with foliage and flecked at one point by the eternal smoke of a torrent. Beyond the beach a white frame house with a veranda showed, and on either side native houses nestled among the coconut trees and breadfruits. The faint wind blowing from landward brought the perfume of vanilla and flowers, colored birds flew in the blue sky above the trees, while the tune of the blue sea beating on the reef came like the song of sleep and summer.

A sulphur-tinted butterfly flittered across the water on the wind, as if to inspect the ship, and flittered away again. On the beach could be seen several natives standing and watching their approach, motionless and seemingly incurious.

"It's all deep water through the break and beyond," said the Captain. "We don't want any pilot."

"There's a chap come out on the veranda of the house," said Harman.

The Captain picked up the glass he had been using, and turned it on the figure in the veranda.

"That's him," said he. "That's the chap right enough. Take a look."

Harman put the glass to his eye, and the veranda and the man leaped within ten feet of him.

The man was short, stout, bull-necked, bullet-headed, wearing a close, clipped beard and with his hair cut to the bone.

"He ain't a beauty," said Harman. "Look, he's going into the house, and here he comes out again."

Sprengel had brought out a pair of marine glasses and was observing the ship through them.

"Wonder if he recognizes me," said the Captain.

Then he stood silent, whistling now and then, and now and then giving an order to the fellow at the wheel.

One of the hands was heaving the lead; his hard, thin voice came up to the bridge is a snarl:

"Mark four! Mark four! Quarter less four!"

The Captain rang the engines to half speed, then to dead slow. The *Penguin* passed the opening in the reef. The water she rode on was like blue satin billowed under by wind; then, in the glassy smooth beyond, Harman, who was forward attending to the anchor, glancing over the side, saw the coral floor beneath them clearly as though he were looking at it through air.

The Captain rang the engines off, the wheel flew to starboard, and the rumble-tumble of the anchor chain through the hawse pipe came back in moist echoes from the woods and cliffs.

Then, the ship safely berthed, the Captain had time to turn his attention to the shore.

Sprengel had vanished into the house, and the few natives on the shore were still standing about in attitudes of indifference. One had taken his seat on the sand, and though there were several canoes on the beach there was no evidence of any thought of launching them.

"It's a good job we scoffed that Pilsener," said Harman, who had come up on the bridge. "It wouldn't have been no use for this chap. You won't get this chap on board without a windlass and a derrick. No, sir! He's one of the retirin' kind. He won't trade, and he won't be civil. I reckon you'd better get that spar gun trained on the beach and some of our chaps ready for a landin' with the rifles, scoop all the money and valuables we can find, and cut stick."

"I've been thinking so myself," said the Captain. "There's no use wasting time enticing this chap on board. Train the gun and get the landing party ready with rifles and cutlasses."

He came down from the bridge, and went aft to his cabin to put on his best

coat. When he came up again the whaleboat was lowered and the landing party getting into her.

They certainly were a most terrific-looking lot, and when the boat's nose touched the sand and they scrambled out and lined up under the direction of Harman, the natives looking on lost their look of indifference, turned, and bolted for the woods.

"They don't like the look of us," said the Captain. "Now then, you chaps, no chasing them. You follow after me, and do what Mr. Harman bids you. Let one man of you disobey orders and he'll have to settle with me."

He produced a navy revolver from his pocket. It was the only serviceable weapon of the expedition, barring the cutlasses; they knew it, and they knew him, and they followed like lambs as he walked toward the house on whose veranda Sprengel had reappeared.

Ten yards away he ordered the others to halt, and advanced alone, putting the revolver back in his pocket.

Sprengel was in pajamas, and he had been perspiring with the heat; he was also in a bad temper and a bit frightened, all of which conditions did not add to the beauty of his appearance.

"Mr. Sprengel, I believe," said the Captain, opening the business.

"That is my name," replied the other. "And who are you, may I ask, and what is your ship doing here and these men?"

"We will go into the house and talk," said the Captain, "if you will kindly lead the way. I am the captain of a British auxiliary cruiser come to have a few words with you."

He followed on the heels of Sprengel, who evidently had not recognized him in the least, into a large, airy room floored with native matting and furnished with American rockers, a bamboo couch, a table, and island headdresses and spears for wall decorations.

"You did not recognize me outside," said the Captain. "Perhaps because I had my hat on. Do you not recognize me now?"

"Not from Adam," replied Sprengel in a violent tone. "I only know that you have landed on my beach with armed men and that you had but till just now a pistol in your hand. Also, I recognize that your ship has a gun trained on my house. Are you aware that this is a German island?"

"That's just the point, my dear man," said the captain, taking a seat unasked. "Are you aware that England is at war with Germany?"

"Eh, what!" said Sprengel, turning more fully on the other. "What you say? England at war with Germany!"

"England at war with Germany. Yes. That is what I said, and I have come to take your island in the name of the British government."

Sprengel sat down in a chair and mopped himself. Sprengel had been practically monarch of Christobal for a long time.

And now the English had come.

It was an eventuality he had always feared, always reckoned with. He knew that war was in the air. He also knew international law, and he was not so much put out as might have been expected.

Indeed, he was frankly impudent.

"Well, I did not make the war," said he. "I am an honest trader going about my business. If Christobal is English—well, it cannot be helped—till we take it back from England. I claim the rights of international law. My property is sacred."

"International law, what is that?" asked Blood.

"Something you would not understand, but which your peddling government fears *and* respects. Something which they would like to put to one side, *but* which they cannot."

"Oh, can't they? Do you mean to

imply that your property can't be touched because of international law?"

"Ab-so-*lu*tely."

"We'll soon see about that," said Blood, "for I've come to take away every rag you've got and every penny. I'll leave you, for you ain't very good, and you can keep the house and the good will of the business, but I want your money."

He stood up.

So did Sprengel. "Say what we may about the Prussians, they are certainly plucky enough.

Threatened with spoliation, all the latent fury of the man flamed out and centered on Blood. He stood for a moment visibly swelling; then he charged.

Had that charge gone home it would have been the worse for the Captain. Instead of meeting it, however, he stepped aside; Sprengel met the wall, nearly bringing the house down, and Harman, who had been listening on the veranda, rushed in.

He had brought some signal halyard line with an eye for eventualities, and they bound the enemy without much trouble.

"Listen to him!" said Harman. "Listen to him chatterin' about outrages to noncombatants. What are ye yourself but an outrage, you fat Proosian! Capt'in, lend me your wipe."

The captain handed over his handkerchief, and Harman, with suspicious dexterity, rolled it into a gag. "That'll stop your tongue," said he. "And now for the plunder."

They found the safe where the unfortunate Sprengel kept his money. There were five thousand dollars there in silver and American gold coin, and a bank book showing a huge balance at a Berlin bank. Also securities for large amounts. They respected these, as they were useless, and took only the coin.

Then they went over the house and grounds adjoining, and the total loot tabulated roughly ran to:

The amount of coin already specified.

Five thousand cigars.

A suit of new pajamas and a safety razor in case.

A case of Florida water, six bottles of eau de Cologne, all the native headdresses adorning the sitting room.

A live parrot in a cage, half a dozen chickens, and half a boatload of vegetables.

It was not much, but it was all that they could lay hands on. Harman wanted to include a native girl who had come out from among the trees with a basket of fruit on her head, not knowing what was going on, but the Captain vetoed him. He only took the fruit.

Then they pushed off, having first ungagged their victim, unbound him, and locked him in the house.

"And the funny thing is," said the Captain when they had gained the deck and the boat was being winched on board, "he never remembered me, and he doesn't know yet who I am."

"Why didn't you tell him?" said Harman.

"I thought of it, and then I held my tongue. There might be a chance of him making mischief when the war is over if he knew my name."

"But how in the nation could he make mischief?" said the simple-minded Harman. "Germany bust or England bust, it's all the same. What you done was in war time, and so doesn't count."

"I'm not so sure of that," said the captain. "I am not at all too sure of that. All that blab of Sprengel's about the property of nonbelligerents may have something in it. I'm not sure that it mayn't. It seems to me I've heard something about it before. Blast all nonbelligerents; there's always some thorn in the rose.

"Then, leaving the question of non-

belligerents aside, we have to think of our own position. We haven't a letter of marque, we have no more right to go hoofing about the seas gobbling German property than you have to go down Broadway lifting folk's watches."

"Well, what right have we to anything at all?" cut in the exasperated Harman. "Accordin' to you, we haven't the right to breathe nor live."

"Well, it's this way," said Blood. "We have a perfect right to breathe and live as long as we can keep our necks out of the noose."

"D'ye mean to say they'd hang us?"

"It's highly probable. The Germans would, anyhow."

Harman had been attending to the unloading of the boat all through this talk. He now went and spat over the side, and then came back to his companion.

"That's cheerful," said he.

"They might give you the choice of shooting instead of hanging," went on the Captain. "For myself, I prefer hanging, I think, if it's properly done."

"Oh, Lord, no!" said Harman. "I've seen three fellows hanged, and I've swore I would never get hanged if I could help it. Give me shootin', but shootin' or hangin' there's one thing fixed."

"And what's that?"

"We've got the boodle. I ain't one of your clever chaps, and I've no education to speak of, but I've noticed in life that the chaps who get on are the chaps who get a thing fixed and stand on it, same as a chap stands on a scaffolding and builds from it, same as a chap builds a house and doesn't care a durn for the future.

"Now we've got the boodle fixed," Mr. Harman went on, "there's no use in bothering whether we're to be shot or die natural in our bunks. We've gone a certain distance, and what I says is, now we've gone so far let's go the whole hog. Let's rob every one we can lay hands on. That's my idea."

"Germans, you mean?"

"I ain't particular about Germans," said Mr. Harman. "Anything with money to it is good enough for me, but if it eases your mind we'll call 'em Germans."

The Captain whistled for a moment over this broad plan. Then he went to superintend the fellows who were making ready to get the anchor in.

There were no capstan bars on board the *Penguin;* a steam winch did the business. He gave the signal for steam to be turned on, and then went up on the bridge.

The rattle and rasp of the winch pawls and the links of the anchor chain as it was hauled through the hawse pipe roused echoes from the shore. The gulls fishing on the little harbor made by the protecting reef rose, clamoring and beating their wings, and, as though the sound of the anchor chain had managed to free Sprengel, he appeared, having managed to work his way out of a window.

He came running down to the beach, shaking his fist and shouting till the Captain, more for the fun of the thing than any other reason, picked up a rifle and aimed it at him.

Then he turned and vanished into the woods.

The slack of the anchor chain was now in, and now the anchor itself left the water and was hoisted, dripping, to the catheads. The Captain rang on the engines, and the *Penguin* began to back out. She could have turned, but it was easier to back her out, especially as the sea was so smooth.

Outside the reef, as she slued round, she let go her siren.

Three times its echoes returned from the moist-throated woods and cliffs; then, full speed ahead, she went toward the east.

CHAPTER IX.

THE "MINERVA."

Next morning early, Harman, standing on the bridge by the Captain, pointed to a smudge on the eastern horizon. The smoke of a steamer.

The Captain glanced at the spot indicated, shading his eyes with his hand; then he took the glass from its sling.

"I can't make her clearly out," said he. "The wind is covering her with her own smoke."

"She's maybe the mail boat that runs to Samoa," said Harman, "or maybe she's just a tramp. What are you goin' to do?"

"How d'you mean?"

"Well, I mean just that. Are we goin' to let her slip through our hands?"

"Harman," said the Captain, "when I signed on for this cruise I knew I was going in for a shady job; still, there didn't seem much to it, anyway. I knew Shiner was going to tinker up a cable, and I judged he was clever enough to pull the business through safely and give us all a big profit. Well, that scheme is all gone, and now I'm a bloody pirate, it seems. The war with Germany started me on the road, and there's no use in crying out and saying, or pretending, we're privateers. We aren't; we're pirates. That's the long and the short of it. We aren't making war on Germany; we are just collecting dibbs for ourselves. I'm not proud of it, not by a long way; but we're in for it now and may as well make the most of it. You ask me what I am going to do with this vessel? Well, I'm going to go through her."

"Good!" said Harman. "I'm not one for runnin' extra risks, but we've risked so much already it's a pity not to risk a bit more when we have the chanct. For it's not once in a lifetime a chanct comes to sailormen like this."

"I don't suppose it is," said Blood. "It's not every day that chaps like Shiner and Wolff fit out a cable-cutting party and get information of war right first thing through the cut cable. Ah, the smoke's clearing and her hull's coming out; let's see what she's like."

He put the glass to his eye and examined the distant ship; then as he looked he began to whistle.

"Well," said he, taking the glass from his eye, "I reckon we won't go through her—she's a man-o'-war."

"Whatcha say!" cried Harman, seizing the glass. He looked. Then he said:

"I reckon you're right; she's a fightin' ship sure enough. I guess we'll let her go this time, our armaments bein' so unequal; she's headin' right for us, and if you ask for my advice I'd advise a shift of helm."

"Yes," said Blood, "and don't you know that the first thing she'd do if we shifted our helm without a reason would be to come smelling round us? Don't you know that a man-o'-war has no business to do at all but to look after other folk's businesses? She's not due to time anywhere; she's got no cargo to deliver, no owners to grumble at her if she's a day late. No, her business is to keep her eye out on the watch for shady people like you and me, and of course for the enemy if it's war time. No, I reckon we'll keep straight on, but there's one thing we'll do, and that is dismantle the spar gun. I reckon a dummy gun would be a difficult thing to explain away, and that, backed by the faces of our chaps and the fact that we haven't a yard of cable in our tanks and no log except the one I faked up and forgot to keep to date more'n a week ago. Might get us into very serious trouble."

"Is she a Britisher, do you think?" asked Harman, still ogling the approaching vessel through the glass.

"We'll soon see," replied the Captain.

He came down from the bridge, and hustled the fellows round, making them

remove the dummy gun and place it down below on the cable deck.

Then he came back on to the bridge.

The stranger had ceased firing up, and had cleared herself of smoke. She was a cruiser right enough, one of the modern, swift, small-tonnage cruisers that can yet sink you with a broadside or cripple you most effectually with a bow chaser and from the distance of four miles.

Blood laughed as he looked at her.

"I expect she can do her twenty-five knots," said he. "Piracy! Who could do anything with piracy these days between wireless and things like that. Harman, I guess I'm sick of this business and the uncertainty of it. I guess if this chap passes us and leaves us alone I'll make tracks for home—which means Frisco. We can get rid of the *Penguin* somehow or 'nother and crawl up home through Central America. Crawl up home, those are my sentiments now, for I've got a feeling down my spine that this chap is going to stop and speak to us."

"Why should she do that?" said Harman. "Wish you wouldn't be *drawin'* bad luck by prophesying it. Why in the nation should she stop a harmless cable ship?"

"Well, if she's a German she'd stop us to see if we are English, and then sink us, and if she's a Britisher she'd stop us to see if we were German. I wouldn't mind in either case only for the *Spreewald* and Christobal Island *and* Wolff and Shiner. If the Germans were to take us, and Wolff and Shiner were to get news of our capture they'd make things pretty warm for us."

"Let's hope she's a Britisher," said Harman.

A mile off, the stranger, who had obviously slackened speed, ported her helm slightly to give the *Penguin* a view of what she was saying.

She was saying, in the language of colored flags:

"Lay to till I board you——"

"She doesn't ask to be invited," said Blood. "Run up the Stars and Stripes —thank God she's English!—but then we're German; at least we're owned by Wolff and Shiner, and *they're* German as sausages. Of course, they may have become naturalized Americans, but a British ship is not likely to go into the family history of Shiner or Wolff. Down with you, Harman, anyway, and get the ship's papers together and have a box of cigars on the table for the chap that is sure to come aboard. And mind, you know nothing; pretend to be a bit silly, though that doesn't need much pretense. Keep your mouth closed and refer everything to me. I guess this situation will require some fancy work in the way of lying."

"I'll be mum," said Harman.

He slid down the bridge steps, and scuttered along the deck to the saloon companionway, while Blood, alone in his glory on the bridge, and trying to assume the dignity that he did not feel, gave his orders to the crew.

He rang the engines to half speed, and then to dead slow; then he rang them off, and the *Penguin,* whose heart had stopped beating, one might have fancied through fright, lay moving slightly to the swell and waiting for the attentions of the *Minerva,* for that was the stranger's name.

She formed a pretty picture across the blue water despite her ugly coloring and her singular lines. One knows it to be bad taste to praise enthusiastically the new engines of warfare on land or sea. All the same, a twenty-five-knot cruiser, with her teeth showing, gives one a picture of power and speed combined hard to beat in the present, and perfectly unbeaten by the past.

Blood was not thinking things like this. He was taking the measure of the six-inch guns that seemed straining their long necks to get at him; also of the little guns that showed their gangs

at all sorts of loopholes and unexpected places. He had never been so close up to the business side of a warship in all his sea experience, and he noticed everything with the freshness and the vividness and the deep, deep interest that objects assume for us when they suddenly become bound up with our most vital interests and our lives.

I can fancy Charles the First quite disregarding Bishop Juxon, the crowd, and all the great considerations that must have crowded about the scaffold erected in Whitehall; disregarding all these while he fixed his eyes on the ax with its handle of good English beachwood and its blade of British iron. That ax spoke to him if anything ever spoke to him, and it said, in words as well as deed: I am the symbol of the British people.

To Blood the *Minerva* was saying the same thing.

Blood was a Nationalist—when he had any politics at all—and maintained a sentimental dislike for Britannia. He really did not dislike her, but he fancied he did. In reality, he admired her. He admired her as a lady whom, to use his own language, you may belt about the head as much as you like, but who is sure to give you the knock-out blow in the long, long end.

The *Minerva* was one of the things she hit people with, and the weapon impressed him. The incongruity of the fact that he had been robbing Germans in the name of England did not strike him at all.

There are all sorts of subtleties in the Irish character that no foreigner, be he Englishman or German or Frenchman or Scot or Welshman, can understand.

Blood, then, though he had been out of Ireland long enough to lose his brogue almost entirely, though England had "betrayed his country in the past," and had never done much for him in the present would, had he seen an English and a German ship in action, have joined in on the side of England. He had often abused England, yet at a pinch he would have fought for her.

That is the Irish attitude, and it is unalterable. Ireland is, as a matter of fact, bound to England in wedlock. John Bull married her forcibly a great many years ago, and treated her cruelly bad after the marriage. She is always flinging the fact at his head, and she will go on doing so till doomsday, but she is his wife, and no matter what she says she is always ready, at a pinch, to go for any stranger that interferes with him.

When Blood declared war against the Germans he did so in all good faith as an ally of England. Cold reflection, however, told him that England would certainly not recognize that alliance, nor would she recognize the *Penguin* as one of her fighting ships, official or unofficial, that with her peculiar ideas as to the rights of belligerents and non-belligerents she might be as bad a party to be captured by as Germany.

He knew quite well now that between the *Spreewald* affair and the Sprengel business, to say nothing of the original cable-cutting adventure, he would have an exceedingly bad time were this cruiser to clap the shackles on him.

He watched her now as she dropped a boat; then he leaned over and shouted to Harman, who had come on deck again, to have the companionway lowered.

Then, as the boat came alongside, he came down from the bridge to meet his fate.

A young, fresh-looking individual came up the steps—a full lieutenant by his stripes—saluted the quarter-deck in a perfunctory manner, recognized Blood at once as the skipper, and addressed him without ceremony.

"What's the name of your ship?" asked the lieutenant.

"The *Penguin*," replied Blood.

"The deuce it is! Are you sure it's not the *Sea Horse?*"

"The which horse?" inquired Blood, whose temper was beginning to rise.

It was his first experience of British navy ways with merchantmen, ways which are usually decided and heralded by language which is usually abrupt.

"*Sea Horse—Sea Horse*—ah!" His eye had fallen on a life buoy stamped with the word "Penguin." "You *are* the *Penguin*. You will excuse me, but we were looking after something like you—a fifteen-hundred-ton gray-painted boat. The *Sea Horse*. Tramp steamer gone off her head and turned pirate, looted a German vessel under pretense that war had broken out between England and Germany."

"Well, it wasn't us," laughed the captain. "Couldn't you see we were a cable ship by the gear on deck?"

"Yes, but the message came to us by wireless with bare details. What was your last port?"

"Christobal Island, quite close here—we have only left it a few hours, and by the same token there was news there that war had broken out between Germany and England."

"How did they get it?"

"Well, the fellow there—Sprengel is his name—has a wireless installation, and he picked up a message some days ago."

"He picked up a lie. It has been all over the Pacific, seems to me. There's been a sort of dust-up over a place called Agadir, but there's no small chance of war, worse luck. The business has been settled. We had the news only yesterday."

No news could have been more dumfounding to the unfortunate Blood than this. The cable message that had so upset Shiner and Wolff had been some lying news-agency rumor. On the strength of it he had done all he had done. More than that was the mystery of the *Sea Horse*. What on earth did it mean? Had another ship gone pirating on the same rumor?

He managed, however, to keep a cheerful countenance and even to speak.

"Well," said he, "I'm right glad to hear that. War may be all right for you, but it's no good to our business."

"No, I don't suppose it is," said the lieutenant. "Well, I suppose you are all right, but just as a matter of form I'll have a glance at your log."

"Of course," said Blood, with death in his heart. "If you'll come down to the saloon I'll have the greatest pleasure in showing it to you."

The lieutenant followed him below.

Harman had put out the log and the cigar box on the saloon table. The lieutenant refused a cigar, but showed interest at the sight of the log. He sat down and opened it.

"Why, good heavens," said he, "you haven't been writing it up for days and weeks! Where's your first officer's log?"

"Harman doesn't keep one," said Blood, whose anger was beginning to rise against the situation and his visitor.

"Who's Harman?" inquired the other, his eyes running over the entries.

"My first officer."

"Oh, doesn't he? H'm—h'm! Most extraordinary—what's this? 'Reached the Spot.' What spot?"

"The spot on the cable we were due to work on."

"What cable?"

"You must ask the owners that. It's private business."

"Who are the owners?"

"Shiner & Wolff."

"Where are they?"

Blood did not know where the precious pair might be at that moment, but he answered:

"Frisco."

"Are they a cable company or simple cable repairers?"

"Repairers, I think."

"Where are the rest of the ship's papers?"

Blood tramped off to his cabin, and returned with a bundle of all sorts of documents.

"Well," said the lieutenant, "I can't go through them now. I must get back and report. I'll take these with me for reference." He bundled log and papers together and put them under his arm.

"Look here!" said Blood. "Are you taking those off the ship?"

"Only for reference," replied the other. "They will be quite safe, and you can have them back when I have reported."

"Very well," said Blood.

"And now I'd just like to have a look round. Follow me, please."

This was a new departure. A command. Blood followed, sick at heart, but cigar still in mouth.

The lieutenant evidently knew all about cable ships.

He stopped at the after-cable tank.

"Cable tank—how much have you on board?"

"Not an inch," replied Blood.

"H'm! But you want some spare cable for mending purposes."

"We used it all."

The officer passed on through the square where the forward cable tank was situated, then down to the cable deck.

Here the first thing he spotted was the infernal spar gun.

He smelled round it, and inquired its use.

"I don't know," said Blood. "It was on the ship when I joined—some truck left over from the last voyage, I believe."

This suddenly recalled the inquisitor to something he had forgotten—Blood's Board of Trade certificates.

Blood produced them, having to go back to his own cabin for them. They told their tale of long unemployment.

The lieutenant was a gentleman, and having glanced them over returned them without comment. Then he left the ship with the log and the papers under his arm, and was rowed back to the *Minerva*.

"What's up?" asked Harman.

"We are," said Blood. "There's no war; the whole thing was a lying rumor those two guys sucked in over the cable. There was a good chance of war, but it was patched up, and it's now peace, perfect peace, with us perched on top of it like a pair of blame fools." He told the whole tale that we know. Then suddenly light broke upon him.

"The *Sea Horse,*" said he. "I see the whole thing now—when we fired those two blighters off the ship and shoved them on the *Spreewald* it was their interest not to give the show away. We were nose on to the *Spreewald,* so she couldn't see our name. Shiner and Wolff would be the last men to give their own names, considering what they'd been doing and the latitude they were found in. They'd be sure to pose as innocents taken off some other ship by us. They'd fake up a yarn, and they'd fake up a new name for the old *Penguin.*"

They had gone on to the bridge again and they were talking like this with an eye always upon the *Minerva,* that arbiter of their destinies.

"That's easy enough to understand," said Harman. "What gets me is how to understand our position. What the deuce did that scuffy want, cartin' off the log and the ship's papers for? Ain't there no law to protect an innocent vessel bein' manhandled by a durned British cruiser in times of peace? What's to become of peaceful tradin' if such things is allowed? Where's the rights of neutrals if a monkey on a stick like that blue-an'-gold outrage on the name of a sailor can walk on board you an' walk off with the log book in his pocket? That's what I want to know. I'm not a man that wants much

in this here world. I only wants justice."

"Faith, and I think you are going to get it," said the Captain. "Bare justice, as the little boy's mother said when she let down his pants. I'm not saying I didn't do most of the inciting to the piracy and plundering, but whether or or no we are all in the soup, and the chap with the ladle is fishing for us, and there's no use in bothering or laying blame—we'd have shared equally in the profits."

"Oh, I'm makin' no remarks," said Harman. "I'm not the man to fling back at a pal, and I guess I can take the kicks just the same as the ha'pence, but you've a better headpiece than me, and what I say is, be on the lookout to get the weather gauge of these jokers so be it's possible. You can do it if any man can—get out of the soup and be a pineapple."

"Give us a chance," said the Captain. "I'm not going to haul my colors down without a fight for it."

They stood watching the *Minerva.* Men were cleaning brasswork on board of her, a squad of sailors were doing Swedish exercises; the ship's work was going on as unconcernedly as though she were lying in harbor, and this vision of cold method and absolute indifference to all things but duty and routine did not uplift the hearts of the gazers.

"They're stuffed with pride, those chaps," said the single-minded Harman. "They potter about and potter about the seas with their noses in the air, lookin' down at the likes of us who do all the work's to be done in the world. And what do they do? Nothin'! They never carry an ounce of grain or a hoof or hide, or mend a cable or fetch a letter, and they looks down on us that do as dirt. *You* saw that josser in the brass-bound coat and the way he come aboard—they're all alike."

"She's moving up to us," said the Captain, suddenly changing his position. "She's going to speak us."

The *Minerva,* with a few languid flaps of her propeller, was indeed moving up to them. When she came ranging alongside, within megaphone distance, a thing—a midshipman, Blood said—speaking through a megaphone nearly as big as itself addressed the *Penguin.*

"Ship ahoy! You are to follow us down to Christobal Island."

"Good Lord!" said Harman. The Captain said nothing, merely raising his hand to signify that he had understood.

"What's your speed?" came again the voice through the megaphone.

The captain seized the bridge megaphone.

"Ten knots," he answered.

"Right!" came the reply. "Follow us at full speed."

The blue water creamed at the *Minerva's* forefoot as her speed developed. She drew away rapidly, and the *Penguin* slowly and sulkily began to move, making a huge circle to starboard.

When she got into line the *Minerva* was a good two miles ahead.

Said Harman, for the Captain was speechless:

"I call this playing it pretty low down. *Jumping* Jeehoshophat, but we'll be had before Sprengel! He won't rub his hands—oh, no! I guess he won't rub his hands! And the old *Penguin* is going as if she liked it. Ain't there no gunpowder aboard to blow a hole in her skin an' sink her? And that durned British cruiser as tight fixed to us as though she was towing us with a forty-foot hawser. I reckon if I had some poison I'd pour it out and drink it. I would that! I feel that way low down I'd pour it out and drink it."

"Oh, *shut* your head!" said the Captain. "You carry on like an old woman with the stomach ache. We're caught

and we're being lugged along by the police officer, and there's no use in clutching at the railings or making a disturbance. The one good thing is that we havn't any of those chaps on board us, sitting with fixed bayonets on the saloon hatch and we in the saloon. The first thing to be done is to steal as much distance out of her as we can without her kicking."

He went to the engine-room speaking tube:

"Below there, heave any muck you think likely to make smoke in the furnaces; there's a lot of old rubber and canvas waste on the cable deck. I'll tell Mr. Harman to have it sent down to you. I want to 'pear as if we were doin' more than our best—yes, we're caught and bein' led to port, and we mean to have a try to get loose; keep a good head of steam, and keep your eye on the engine-room telegraph. I'll be altering the speed now and then."

He sent Harman to do what he said; then he stood watching the distant *Minerva*. She was now about two and a quarter miles ahead. The two vessels were going at about equal speed, with the balance perhaps in favor of the *Minerva*. He ordered the engines to half speed, and kept them so for a couple of minutes, then put them on to full speed again. The result of this proceeding was an almost imperceptible gain on the part of the cruiser.

In the next two hours, by the skillful use of this device, the distance between the two ships was increased to at least three and a half miles. Blood was content with that; so gradually had the increase been made that the *Minerva*, suspecting nothing, stood it, but Blood instinctively felt that she would not stand any more. The man had a keen psychological sense.

He was reckoning on a change of weather.

The wind had fallen absolutely dead, and the heat was terrific, simply because the air was charged with moisture. The captain knew these latitudes.

"I don't see what you're after," said Harman, coming up on the bridge. "What's the good of stealin' a few cable len'ths out of her? We can't get rid of her by day, for her guns can hit us at six miles, and if we made a show to bolt she'd turn and be on us like a cat pouncin'. She can do twenty-five knots to our twelve. Then at sundown she's sure to close with us and keep us tied tight to her tail."

"Maybe," said the Captain.

He said nothing more.

An hour later he had his reward.

The horizon to westward and beyond the *Minerva* had become slightly indistinct; the horizon to eastward and behind them was still brilliant and hard.

He knew what was happening. A slight change of temperature was stealing from the west, precipitating the moisture as it came in the form of haze.

He put his hand on the lever of the telegraph and rang the engines off.

Harman said nothing. He went to the side and spat into the sea. Then he came back and stood watching.

"There's nothing like haze to knock gun firing on the head," said the Captain.

Harman said nothing, but moistened his lips. A minute passed, and then the *Minerva*, all at once, like a person showing the faintest sign of indecision, showed the faintest change in definition. The faint haze had touched her.

At the same moment the Captain rang up the engines, and ordered the helm to be put hard astarboard. The *Penguin* forged ahead, and began to turn.

"They're so busy cleaning brasswork and saluting each other that they haven't noticed Mr. Haze," said the Captain. "They're new to this station and don't know that Mr. Fog is sure coming on her heels. Ah, she's seen us, and she's turning."

The *Minerva,* in fact, had also put her helm hard astarboard.

She was making a half circle, and as small a half circle as she possibly could, but the *Penguin* had got a quarter circle start on her, and while the *Minerva* was still going about the *Penguin* was off.

If hares ever chased ducks this business might be compared to a lame duck being chased by a hare. The *Minerva* could steam ten miles to the *Penguin's* five and over; her guns even now could have sunk the *Penguin* with ease, though they might not have made very good shooting, owing to the haze; that elusive, delusive haze.

"Below there," cried the Captain through the engine-room speaking tube. "Shake yourself up, MacBean! Whack the engines up—give us fifteen or burst! What's the matter? We're being chased by that British cruiser, and it's the penitentiary for the lot of us if we're caught —that's all."

He turned, and at that moment the *Minerva* spoke.

A plume of smoke showed at her bow, there came a shrill, long-drawn "whoo-oooo" like a hysterical woman "going off" somewhere in the sky, then a jet of spume and a lather of foam in the sea two cable lengths to port.

It was a practice shell, and it left the water and made another plume a mile and a half ahead and yet another a mile beyond that.

It was her first and last useful word, for now the haze had her, destroying her for war purposes as efficiently as a bursting shell in her magazine.

The haze had also taken the *Penguin;* everything seemed clear all around, but all distant things had nearly vanished.

Another shell came whooing and whining from the spectered *Minerva* before the white Pacific fog blotted her out.

A faint wind was bringing it, less a wind than a traveling chillness, a fall of temperature, moving from east to west.

The Captain, having given his instructions to the helmsman, left the bridge, and went down below.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST OF THE "PENGUIN."

South of Chiloe Island, on the Chile coast, there lies a little harbor which shall be nameless.

Here, six days later, the *Penguin* was hurriedly coaling—on the *Spreewald's* dollars.

It was at eight o'clock on a glorious and summerlike morning that she put out of this place with her bunkers only half full, her stores just rushed aboard cumbering the deck, and a man swung over the stern on a board, painting her name out above the thunder and pow-wow of the screw.

Blood would never have wasted paint and time in the attempt to alter the name of his ship had it been the English he dreaded now. As a matter of fact, word had come to the chief official at the little nameless port above indicated that the Germans were out looking for a fifteen-hundred-ton cable boat named the *Penguin,* gray-painted and captained by a master mariner named Michael Blood.

The bleating of the infernal *Spreewald* had been heard all over the Pacific. Sprengel's bad language was following it. The *Minerva* had communicated by wireless with the German gunboat *Blitz,* lying at the German island of Savaii, in the Navigators. The *Blitz* had spoken to the cruiser *Homburg,* lying at Tongatabu; from Tongatabu it had been flashed to Fiji, and from there to Sydney. From Sydney it went to San Francisco, reaching the City of the Golden Gate in time for the morning newspapers; from there it passed in dots and dashes down the west Ameri-

can seaboard to Valparaiso and Valdivia.

Added to all the turmoil, the cable company whose cable had been broken smelled the truth and were howling for the *Penguin's* blood.

Marconi waves from Valparaiso had found the German cruiser squadron far at sea, and they had started on the hunt.

This was the news that had come to the chief official at the little Chilean port, and which, being friendly toward Blood and unfriendly toward Germany, he communicated to the former. There was also the matter of a tip, which left the coffers of the *Penguin* completely empty after the account for coal, provisions, and harbor dues had also been settled.

"What's the course?" asked Harman as the coast line faded behind them.

"Straight out to sea," replied Blood. "Due west till we cut the track from Taliti to the Horn; then southeast for the Straits of Magellan. Ramirez is going to fake them with the news that we have gone north."

"Why not go straight for the Straits down the coast instead of puttin' out like this?"

"They'll be hunting the coast; sure to send a ship south. They'll never think of us going west; the last thing they'd think of."

"Are you sure Ramirez is safe?"

"Oh, he's safe enough. He hates the Germans, and he has taken my money. He'll stick to his bargain. I wish we were as safe. Good Lord, every cent gone and nothing to show for it but this old hooker which we can't sell, and the sure and certain prospect of the penitentiary if we don't work a miracle —and even then we are lost dogs. Frisco is closed to us. We never can show our noses in Frisco again."

"I wouldn't have come on this cruise if I'd known things was goin' to pan out like this," said the ingenuous Harman. "No, indeedy! I'd have stuck to somethin' more honest. What I want to know is this: What's the use of war, anyway? When it has a chanct of doin' a man a good turn the blighted thing holds off, whereas if you and me had been runnin a peace concern it's chances that it'd have come on. No, blamed if I don't turn a Methodis' passon if I ever get out o' this benighted job. It's crool hard to be choused like this by a cus't underhand trick served on one just as a chance turns up to make a bit. Why couldn't they have fought and been done with it? What's the good of all them guns and cannons, and all them ships? What in the nation's the good of them ships? Seems to me the only good of them is to go snuffin' and smellin' round the seas, pokin' their guns into other folk's affairs and spoilin' their jobs. Well, there's an end of it. I'm a peace party man now and forever more. Blest if it ain't enough to make a man turn a Bible Christian!"

"You'd better go and see to the stowing of the stores," said the Captain. "There's no use in carrying on like that. I didn't make war, or else I guess I'd have made it more limber on its legs. Come! Hurry up!"

They stood two days to the west, and then they turned to the south coast and made their dash for the Straits.

The weather had changed. It was steadily blowing up from the westward. The sea, under a dull sky, had turned to the color of lead, and the heavy swell told of what was coming.

They had not sighted a ship since leaving the Chilean coast, but three days after altering their course the smoke of a steamer appeared, blown high by the wind and far to westward. The wind had scarcely increased in force, but the sea was tremendous and spoke of what was coming.

The Captain, on the bridge, stood with a glass to his eye, trying to make

out the stranger. He succeeded, and then, without comment, handed the glass to Harman.

Harman, steadying himself against the rolling and pitching of the ship, looked.

A waste of tempestuous water leaped at him through the glass, and then, bursting a wave top to foam with her bows, gray as the seas she rode came a ship of war.

A cruiser, with guns nosing at the sky as if sniffing after the traces of the *Penguin*. She was coming bow on, and now, falling off a point or two, her fore funnel seemed to broaden out and break up. It was the three funnels showing, now *en masse* and now individually. Then, as she came to again, the three funnels became one.

"She's a three-funnel German," said Harman, "and she has spotted us."

Even as he spoke the wind suddenly increased in violence.

"I'm not bothering about her much," said the Captain. "I'm bothering about what's in front of us."

"Whacher mean?"

"Mean! Look at the sea and the stuff that's coming. Could we put the ship about in this sea? No, we couldn't. You know very well the old rolling log would turn turtle. Well, what's before us? A lee shore. If we don't reach the opening of the Straits of Magellan before sundown we're dead men all. Germans! I wish I were safe in the hold of a good German ship."

The truth of his words burst upon Harman. There are no lights at the entrance of the Magellan Straits; the entrance is not broad; to hit it in the darkness would be next door to impossible, and not to hit it would be certain death.

It was impossible to put the ship about. Harman's extraordinary mind did not seem much upset at the discovery.

"D'ye think we'll do it?" asked he.

"I don't know," said the Captain. "We may and we mayn't. You see, we haven't a patent log. I haven't had a sight of the sun for two days. I can't figure things to a nicety. But if I had ten patent logs I wouldn't use them now. I'd be afraid to—what would be the good? Mac is whacking up the engines for all they're worth."

"Well, maybe we'll do it," said Harman, applying his eye again to the glass. Then: "She's going about."

The Captain took the glass.

The cruiser was turning from her prey before it was too late. It was a terrific spectacle, and once the captain thought she was gone. The foam was bursting as high as her fighting tops and the gray water pouring in tons over her decks.

Yet she did it, and the last Blood saw of her was the kick of her propellers through sheets of foam.

At four o'clock that day they knew that they could not do it. There was no grog on board, so they were having a cup of tea in the saloon. The Captain sat at the head of the table, before the tin teapot and a plate of fancy biscuits.

The captain and Harman were the only two men on board with a knowledge of what was coming.

"Another lump of sugar in mine," said Harman. "I don't hold with tea; I never did hold with tea. The only thing that can be said for it is it's a drink. And how some of them blighters ashore lives suckin' it day and night gets me."

He was drinking out of his saucer.

"Oh, tea's all right. I reckon tea's all right," said the Captain in an absent-minded manner.

"Maybe it is, but give me a hot whisky and you may take your tea to them that like it," replied Harman.

He lit his pipe and went on deck. The Captain followed. They could not

keep away from the fascination up above.

The bos'n was on the bridge, and they relieved him.

Not a sign of land was in sight, and the sea was running higher than ever.

"You see," said the Captain, "we can't make it. It'll be sundown in an hour. We'll strike the coast some time after dark, and God have mercy on our souls."

"You ain't tellin' the hands?" said Harman.

"No use tellin' them. I told Mac, so that he might get the best out of the engines."

"And there's no bit of use gettin' out life belts," said Harman. "I know this coast; rocks as big as churches an' cliffs that nuthin' but flies could crawl up; and b'sides which if a chap found himself ashore he'd either starve or be et by niggers. They're the curiosest chaps, those blighters down here. I guess the A'mighty spoiled them in the bakin' and shoved them down here by the Horn to hide them from sight. Wonder what Wolff and Shiner is doin' by this?"

"God knows!" said the Captain.

The darkness fell without a sight of the land, and, leaving the bos'n on the bridge, they came down for a while to the engine room for a warm. Mac just inquired if there was any sight of land, and said nothing more.

The engines were no longer being pressed, and they smoked and watched the projection and retraction of the piston rods, the revolution of the cranks, and all the labors of this mighty organism so soon to be pounded and ground to death on the hard rocks ahead.

It was toward midnight that the coast spoke, so that all men could hear on board the *Penguin.*

Its voice came through the yelling blackness of the night like the roar of a railway train in the distance.

The crew were gathered aft and in the alleyways, for all forward of the bridge the decks were swept. Harman and the Captain were on the bridge.

Mac had the word to give her every ounce of steam he could get out of the boilers, in the desperate idea that the harder she was pressed the higher she might be driven on the rocks, and the tighter she might stick.

The roaring of the breakers seemed now all around them, and the Captain and Harman were clinging to the bridge rails, bracing themselves for the coming shock, when—just as a curtain is drawn aside in a theater—the rushing clouds drew away from the moon.

The white, placid full moon whose light showed the foam-dashed coast to either side of them, and right ahead clear water.

They had struck the Magellan Straits by some miracle, just as the bullet strikes the bull's-eye of a target, and right to port they saw a great white ghost rising in the moonlight and falling again to the sea.

It was the foam breaking on the Westminster Hall.

It was breaking three hundred feet high, and Harman, as he was hurled along to the safety of the Straits, caught a glimpse of the great rock itself after a wave had fallen from it, glistening in the moonlight desolately, as slated roofs glisten after rain.

That was a sight which no man, having once seen, could ever forget.

I met Blood last year. He was exceedingly prosperous, or seemed so. He told me this story, and I have so mixed names and places that he himself would scarcely recognize the chief actor, much less his enemies. As to the fate of the *Penguin,* I could only get him to say that she "went down" somewhere south of Rio, but that all hands were saved. Harman, he said, had turned religious.

That Inside Song

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

BO, it's goin' to be hot all right!
The sun's a-floodin' the eastern range.
Mebby the camp was some cold last night,
But there's nothin' like havin' a little change.
Money? No. Just lots of room for me;
Hills and mountains and plains and such,
For the eyes that I got they were made to see,
And my ears to hear—but they don't hear much;
Only a kind of a' inside song,
Like when the grasshopper quits his sad,
Singin': "Rickety-click. Why, there's nothin' wrong!"
And—after the coffee it ain't so bad.

The wind is makin' my bed for me,
Smoothin' the grass where I'm goin' to flop
When the quail roosts up in the live-oak tree,
And my legs feel like as they want to stop.
Pal or no pal it's about the same;
For nobody knows how you feel inside.
Hittin' the grit is a lonesome game——
Quit? No matter how hard I tried.
But mebby I will when that inside song
Quits a-buzzin' like bees that's mad;
"Rickety-click. Why, there's nothin' wrong!"
And—after the coffee it ain't so bad.

Bo, I've beat it from Los to Maine;
Then, not knowin' just what to do,
I turned and slippered it back again,
Wantin' to see—just the same as you.
Ridin' rods and a-dodgin' flys;
Eatin' at times—when my luck was good;
Spcilin' the con to the easy guys,
But never just makin' it understood,
Even to me, how that inside song
Keeps a-handin' me out the glad,
Singin': "Rickety-click. Why, there's nothin' wrong!"
And—after the coffee it ain't so bad.

Empty Barrels

By Bozeman Bulger

Author of "His Last Leg," "The Pen is Mightier," Etc.

Many things go to the making of a successful ball team: nerve for instance, a good eye, sprinting ability, muscle, and—as in this instance—empty barrels

IT had never occurred to Wienie Dahmbusch that the losing of a pennant by the Bluelegs, after having won it twice, would mean anything more than another season in which to try again. When the Speedboys, now known as champs, had nosed out the Bluelegs under the superstitious lead of George Stanton, the big German outfielder took it as a matter of course. He was not even interested enough to wait and see these champs win the world's series in four straight games, a thing no club had done before. That this record-breaking feat would affect him—his peaceful, quiet manner of living—was never dreamed of.

Spud Monahan, the ninety-pound mascot, his one pal on the team, had given Wienie an inkling of what was to come, but the warning had fallen on barren soil. The one thing Dahmbusch did not possess was imagination. So accustomed was this big fellow to the regular routine, and so inherent was his love for system, that he could not conceive of anything different. For the two years of success Manager Jack McGill had permitted him to pursue his own ideas of physical and mental comfort. Allowed to occupy his isolated corner in the bench, remain silent as long as he pleased, and hit the ball in his own sweet style, Wienie was quite content.

"As long as that Dutchman hits .300 and pops that pill in the pinches, let him alone and lay off with that kidding," was an order he had heard given by the boss, and one in which he took great comfort.

"I tell you, though, there's something coming off next year," warned little Spud, whose more alert mind had sensed something in the air. "The boss ain't watching them world's series games for nothing. He'll grab some of that jinx stuff, sure as the world."

Dahmbusch, busily engaged in strapping a suit case, did not reply.

"He thinks Stanton beat us out by killing the jinxes," added the mascot, but failed to arouse any interest. The unimaginative German got his things together and went home, unimpressed.

During the winter Wienie had shown no signs of mental disturbance. He accepted the new trend of events philosophically, as part of the game.

"We can't always win," was the sum total of the interview he gave out to the little newspaper in his home town, those four words also comprising his entire conversation during these lean months on the subject of the national pastime. He had deemed them quite sufficient.

On the very first day of spring practice, however, a feeling came over Dahmbusch that all would not be well. And, to make matters worse, the big German's hitting fell off in exact proportion to the growth of this feeling.

"There's no use in talking, fellows," announced Manager McGill, a few days

before the opening of the regular season, and after he had seen Dahmbusch go three weeks without a good, healthy wallop. "We've got to play these hunches." That particular afternoon a cross-eyed girl had watched the exhibition game, and the Bluelegs were ignominiously defeated by a team of bush-leaguers.

"Now, don't start that old gag about it being a lot of bunk," he cautioned Larry Hennessey, the second baseman, about to interrupt him. "I used to be that kind of a boob, but I've studied this thing out. You can't tell me that George Stanton won this world's series on ball playing alone—not with that bunch of clucks he's got."

"All right, boss, I'm with you," agreed Hennessey. "What's the answer?"

"Well, in the first place," argued the manager, "you know as well as I do that he went into that world's series with that coin in his pocket—that thing that looks like a quarter, the one that was sent to him from Cuba, and that was issued by that crazy smoke that went off his nut and called himself the Black Pope. When they put him in the asylum, this friend of Stanton's copped the coin and sent it to George for luck. That's what done the trick, and don't you make no mistake about it. He started trimming us the minute he got it, and they couldn't even stop him in the world's series."

The Bluelegs evidently were impressed. For a moment there was silence.

"Yes, but we haven't got any of them coins," observed Hennessey.

"No, but there's plenty of other things," McGill replied, "and we can't lose nothing by trying 'em."

During this impressive discussion of the jinx-dispelling qualities of certain signs and hunches, Wienie Dahmbusch had stuck to his isolated corner, brooding over his failure to get a hit. Very likely he had not heard a word of what McGill had said. To him bench conversation was merely so much talk, a habit that certain players indulged in like cigarette smoking, for instance. The awakening from his reverie was startling.

"Wienie," McGill called to the big German, "the season opens day after to-morrow. Did you know that?"

"I read it in the papers," Dahmbusch replied.

"Well, I'm glad you found it out. Now, listen: I want you to wear a red necktie with an orange stripe in it, and I want you to have it on the very first day. Get me?"

The big, oxlike eyes of the German outfielder turned on McGill in amazement. Wienie couldn't think of anything to say, so he simply stared.

"I mean just what I say," insisted McGill. "In the last four days you haven't got anything that even looks like a hit. You're jinxed, that's all. A red-and-orange tie is the only thing that'll change your luck."

"Do I have to believe in it?" the big German asked, in all seriousness.

"I don't care whether you believe in it or not. It's a hunch, and you've got to go through with it."

Considering further words unnecessary, Dahmbusch began polishing a bat which had lain at his feet.

"Where'd you get that one?" inquired Hennessey, unable to hold in longer. "Can you see that big squarehead in a red-and-yellow necktie?"

The whole club laughed—that is, all of them but McGill and Dahmbusch, some recruit suggesting that it might stop the cars.

"They can stop the whole town if they want to," said McGill testily, "but Wienie's got to wear that tie. I'm running this ball club."

"Do you pay for the tie?" inquired the German solicitously. The general laugh that followed saves an explana-

tion as to Dahmbusch's reputation for being extremely conservative in the matter of spending money.

"I forgot about your being so short," McGill answered. "Yes, I'll buy it."

"But I don't get the idea, yet," said Hennessey. "Where'd you dig that one up?"

"I don't suppose you fellows noticed how Hank Simmons walloped that pill in the world's series, did you?" asked McGill. "No, and I don't suppose you was enough interested in your business to know that he hadn't made a hit for two weeks before the big games."

The whole gang turned to listen. It was new stuff to them.

"Just before the big works started," went on McGill, "an old lady out in Iowa sent Hank a yellow-and-red tie, telling him that he would hit the ball as long as he wore it."

"And he fell for it?" asked Hennessey.

"Fall for it? He is wearing it yet—sleeps in it. The first day he put on the tie he got two three-sackers, driving in the winning run with the last one. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Do I have to sleep in it?" inquired Dahmbusch, who was making the entire question a personal issue.

"You can use your own judgment," McGill replied, glowering. "If you've got the interest of the club at heart, you'll do what's best. Yes, and let me tell you fellows another thing. The day Hank put that tie on he was walking with George Stanton, who had the Black Pope's coin, and two loads of empty barrels passed them on the way to the park!"

With that McGill's jaws snapped in finality. Nothing more could be said. Triumphantly he scanned the faces of the athletes strung out along the bench.

"That cinches it, I reckon," spoke up Jimmy Dugan, the veteran pitcher. "I ain't on to the red-and-yellow tie stuff, but I do know that when you see a load of empty barrels it's a sure-fire win."

"There's nobody going to give you an argument on that," declared Hennessey. "Everybody knows the luck in empty barrels—everybody but Wienie Dahmbusch here."

"I don't know nothing 'bout it," said Wienie, plainly bored over the discussion and equally distressed over the thought of having to wear that tie. "I know folks say when a ball player sees a load of empty barrels while going to the park the home club wins sure, but I didn't see one last season."

"Yes, and you'll notice we lost that pennant, too," observed McGill. "If you'd keep your head up you might see something."

"When do I start on the red-and-yellow tie?" asked the unperturbed German.

"You better start to-morrow. I'll buy it from that little hunchback down at Simon's to-night."

Wienie talked this grave situation over at length—at length for him—with Spud Monahan, the ninety-pound mascot, that night. For three seasons Wienie had boarded with the Widow Monahan, and Spud was his one and only confidant.

The discussion began at the supper table with the Widow Monahan a privileged listener. In fact, she had some decided ideas of her own about omens and signs.

"Spud," said Wienie, looking up from his pig's knuckle, and breaking a long silence, "I reckon it's the best thing to follow orders, but I don't like the idea of wearing that tie." The tie in question lay on the table, and after scanning it carefully the big German glanced regretfully at the one around his neck, a gray-and-black affair that he had worn for a couple of seasons. "Now, if I thought it would do any good——"

"Sure, and you never can tell," spoke

up Mrs. Monahan. "Now, well do I remember, just before my husband, Patrick, died a bird flew into the open window. That was a sure sign of death, and the neighbors had told me not to leave the window open——"

"Is birds back luck?" inquired Spud, showing a sudden and unusual interest.

"There is nothing worse in the world," replied the widow.

"Now I know why George Stanton and them champs of his'n use to raise so much cain when sparrows lit on the grass in front of the bench."

"And it was well that they did," declared Mrs. Monahan, with a knowing shake of her head.

Dahmbusch reached for the brightly colored tie and went to his room. Long before that he had made up his mind that there was nothing in this superstition, and once a German makes up his mind—well, all of McGill's impressive presentation of evidence had fallen on barren soil. There is another German trait which is to obey orders, and Wienie had decided not to balk.

In the street car the next afternoon the passengers, most of whom knew Dahmbusch by sight, looked at that flaring tie and, in fun, shielded their eyes as does an outfielder in the sun field.

Dahmbusch, apparently indifferent to the attention he was attracting, looked out the window in solemn silence. Suddenly the passengers saw him draw back in his seat with an expression of surprise and wonder. Outside a truckload of empty barrels, piled ten feet high, was passing down the street. Wienie unconsciously tightened the knot in his tie and readjusted his scarfpin. Despite his positive views on superstition, he could not keep from thinking about Hank Simmons and what McGill had said about the world's series.

Manager McGill had left the clubhouse when Wienie arrived, and it was lucky for Larry Hennessey that he had. McGill's imperative orders had been: "You fellows lay off that Dutchman till he gets tie broke."

But the spectacle of that flashing silk under the German's somber face was too much. The players couldn't hold in.

"Say, Dutch," observed Larry, pointing to the resplendent scarf, "your nose is bleeding," and Dahmbusch had reached for his handkerchief before a shout of laughter from the half-dressed athletes made him understand. He turned red in the face and yanked viciously at the tie. At any rate, he figured, he would not have to wear it during the game.

"Lay off me, Larry," he finally blurted out. "All I hope for you is that he makes you wear a rabbit foot around your neck," which was Wienie's idea of a terrible curse to put upon an enemy.

But there came a silver lining to this cloud that bowed down the big outfielder. In another hour he was almost content with his lot. In the first inning of the opening game, with stands packed, he had cleaned up with a three-base hit, his first genuine wallop in a month.

"Guess I was crazy!" McGill shouted gleefully from the coaching lines. "Wienie," he added, when the Bluelegs came to the bench, "if you ever let anybody steal that tie I'll fine you a hundred beans."

Dahmbusch was up again in the fourth inning, and almost knocked a leg off the opposing shortstop with a drive that sent in two runs and cinched the game.

Between the innings Rube Gallinger, an old-timer of the Sea Gulls, on his way to the coaching lines, stopped at the Bluelegs' bench for a dipper of water.

"Lucky lot of guys," he muttered, looking over the edge of the dipper at Jack McGill. "Horseshoes hanging all over you. I'd rather have your luck than a license to steal."

"Horseshoes?" laughed McGill. "That's old stuff. Wienie's tie did it. And I guess that big Dutchman didn't pop that one!"

Gallinger paused to listen.

"Maybe it was the load of empties I saw," observed Dahmbusch, immensely pleased with himself.

"Empty barrels?" exclaimed Jimmy Dugan. "And you kept it all to yourself? Wanted to win the game all by yourself, I reckon."

"Wienie," said McGill, "did you ever stop to think that it was the tie that brought on the load of empty barrels? No, I guess you didn't." The manager spat reflectively at a tuft of grass. "I'd give half my ball club for just one guy who could think—just one."

"So you've fell for all that luck stuff, eh?" Gallinger remarked, as he started away, and, pointing his finger at his ear, he made a whirling motion of his hand, indicating wheels in the head. Then, as he heard McGill caution Spud Monahan about allowing birds on the grass in front of the bench, his eye twinkled.

In the seventh inning Gallinger was put off the field for humorous observations concerning the umpire and the umpiring business in general. Whether he was guilty of the baseball crime that was unearthed a few minutes later nobody was ever able to prove, but from that day on, Rube Gallinger always had a feeling that Jack McGill was his enemy.

When the jubilant Bluelegs dashed into the clubhouse, they were all busy slapping Dahmbusch on the back and demanding to see the magic tie which had been left in the locker with his linen collar.

Still unbelieving in the merits of the charm, but naturally proud of the furore it had caused, the big German threw open the locker and reached for his prize adornment. The collar was there, but—the players stood with mouths agape—the magic tie was gone! Its red end, which could have been seen from the outside, evidently had been pulled through one of the inch meshes in the steel grating of the locker and had disappeared.

For an hour Jack McGill was wild. He raved about what he called German stupidity, then jumped on all the Irish, charging that they had stolen the tie for a joke. Every player on the club put in a vigorous denial. As for Dahmbusch he didn't care a rap. He saw a chance to get out of wearing it.

More evidence that the theft was part of a deliberate plot to ruin the Bluelegs came to light the next day. As they showed up for practice, the grass for a space of twenty yards around the bench was literally covered with English sparrows. Shoo as he would, Spud Monahan could not keep them away. Finally McGill investigated the cause of this latest calamity, and found that cracked corn had been scattered all around that side of the field.

"And, I suppose," he said, glaring at the athletes, "that none of you have seen a load of empty barrels?"

Nobody could answer in the affirmative. They all felt the impending disaster. It was also noticeable that Rube Gallinger did not again visit the bench for his usual dipper of water and snatch of repartee.

"As far as the game is concerned," McGill declared, "we might as well pack up and go home. There ain't a chance."

And Jack had sized up the situation correctly. So sure was the Blueleg manager of defeat that he refused to waste one of his best pitchers and sent in an untried recruit as a sacrifice. The youngster did fairly well for three innings, and then faltered. The Sea Gulls batted him all over the lot, Rube Gallinger directing the attack with loud guffaws from the coaching line.

Not that he had any hopes of winning the game, but to satisfy the fans

who had begun to jeer the home club, McGill yanked out the young pitcher and sent in Jimmy Dugan. But it was too late to even stem the tide. Wienie Dahmbusch couldn't get a hit to save his life.

When the recruit came back to the bench, McGill was boiling over, and in no frame of mind to listen to an alibi.

"Mr. Mac," said the boy, "I ought not to have gone in there to-day."

"And why not?" snapped the manager.

"I had a terrible headache all day."

"Why didn't you tell me about it?" demanded McGill.

"I couldn't do that," explained the youngster. "If I had put up a holler when my chance came, you would have accused me of having a yellow streak."

"Well," shot McGill, in that biting sarcasm for which he was noted, "it would have saved you the trouble of proving it."

Dahmbusch had watched this complete rout of the Bluelegs with absolutely no show of emotion. In deep thought he sat in his isolated corner of the bench. By degrees an idea had formed in his brain that it all had come about through McGill's belief in superstition. The big German concluded, after laborious thought, that the Bluelegs couldn't win simply because they thought they couldn't. As long as they believed in hunches, he mused, it would take hunches to make them win. He knew the axiom in baseball, that a club is hard to beat when the players have confidence in being able to win, the contra of this being equally true. Though he may not have recognized it by that name, Wienie Dahmbusch was approaching the outer edge of some very good philosophy. And he never thought merely for amusement or mental exercise. He must use it for practical purposes.

"Spud," spoke Dahmbusch, after a long silence, as he and the little mascot walked home to supper, "did I ever tell you a lie?"

"Not that I ever caught you in," Spud replied, looking at the big outfielder curiously. "What's eatin' on you, anyhow?"

"Well, I'm going to tell one soon," declared Dahmbusch, "and I've got to have your help. I hate to make you lie, but it's the only way."

"I'm in," announced the mascot, with enthusiasm. "Gimme the dope."

"Here," said Dahmbusch, reaching into his pocket, "take this fifty cents and go down to that hunchback's place and buy me another tie. You know how the other one looked. Get me one just like it. Understand?"

"I got you," and the mascot started on a run down the avenue. Luckily, he found the duplicate.

After supper Wienie, who seldom went out at nights, wandered down to the hotel hang-out of the bachelors. Fortunately, the first man he saw was Jack McGill, the real object of his visit.

"Why the big smile?" demanded the manager, still nursing his grouch of the afternoon. "Forgot all about that beating we got this afternoon, I reckon?"

"That's just what I'm thinking about," Wienie assured him. "And it ain't going to happen no more. The tie's come back!"

McGill straightened up as if pulled with a string.

"It come in a letter right after supper," lied the big outfielder, "from an old beggar woman who said she found it outside the park. Spud happened to be passing, and told her it belonged to me."

"Did you send her anything?" anxiously inquired McGill.

"Twenty-five cents," Wienie answered. "I paid it out of my pocket."

"You paid a quarter?" McGill couldn't believe this evidence of what he termed recklessness on the part of the German. "It's all right, though.

Greatest luck in the world. George Stanton never passed a beggar in his life without stopping to give something. And it's won him many a game."

In the resplendent tie, Dahmbusch appeared at the park the next day, but saw no empty barrels. It made no difference, however. Spud, quick to catch the spirit of Dahmbusch's latest move, already had announced the sight of empty barrels, and Dahmbusch had to back him up.

In the meantime the ground keeper, under Spud's instruction, had cleaned up every vestige of the cracked corn and thrown it over the fence. Not a bird was in sight. There was absolutely nothing to disturb the supreme confidence of McGill. He put Jimmy Dugan right back in the box, and the Sea Gulls, now playing the last game of the series, couldn't touch him. It was one of the best-pitched games of the year.

In the fourth inning, with two on the bases, Dahmbusch drove a long liner to deep center, the ball striking a tuft of grass and bounding over the fence for a home run.

From that day on, superstition took the Bluelegs in a firm grip. Everything in the way of success was attributed to this or that hunch. Wienie Dahmbusch was hitting like a streak, which was attributed entirely to the red-and-yellow tie.

It came to pass, however, that in figuring out the efficacy of their various jinx busters, the Bluelegs had not taken into consideration the possibility of opposition in the same line. Why couldn't a hunch that brought luck to them also be used by an opponent? In playing the Sea Gulls and the Grays, this important phase of the subject had not arisen. But it did arise, as big as a house, when they had to face George Stanton and his champs. And, strangely enough, the problem about to confront them first found lodgment in the brain of Wienie Dahmbusch.

"What is my red-and-yellow tie going to get me," he said to Spud and the Widow Monahan on the night before the big series, "if Hank Simmons wears one exactly like it? If it works for me, why won't it also work for him? And, besides," he added, with a solemn shake of his head, "he was the first to use it. Now what are we going to do?" It was beyond the widow and Spud.

On the way to the ground it also occurred to Dahmbusch that in keeping birds off the field so as to ward off bad luck, the Bluelegs would also be warding off bad luck for the champs. If he saw a load of empty barrels, the champs had the same chance.

Mustering unusual courage for him, Wienie introduced the unpleasant subject in the clubhouse.

Jack McGill, a quick thinker, but not a deep one, was stumped. He realized, quickly enough, that he had adopted George Stanton's system, and that he had argued at length its efficacy.

"I don't want no advantage over them," he blustered, after a few minutes of hemming and hawing. "All I ask is an even break. You see, if we can beat these other clubs by the hunch system—the Sea Gulls, Grays, and clubs like that——"

"Yes," Larry Hennessey interrupted, "but these champs can do the same thing. Their system is as good as ours, ain't it?"

"All right," declared McGill, wriggling unsuccessfully against such argument, and getting out the best he could. "Let 'em go ahead. They'll have nothing on us."

"Then, boss," Dahmbusch concluded, "it means that we will simply fight it out with the champs for the pennant. The others don't count."

"You got it," agreed McGill. "That's good enough for me. Everything being even in the way of hunches, I don't see why you can't hit as well as Hank Simmons."

When the players were dressed for the struggle the flaming red-and-yellow neckties of Dahmbusch and Simmons waved defiantly from the windows of the two clubhouses that faced each other. Not a sparrow or a pigeon had been seen on the grass that day. Everything pointed to an even break in the matter of luck. For a few minutes before the preliminary practice, the players of the rival teams fraternized as if nothing out of the ordinary was at stake. George Stanton came over and sat on the Bluelegs' bench and talked with McGill about the world's series. He also took particular interest—unusual it seemed to McGill—in the bats, the ends of which were protruding from the big leather bag.

"Lot of good wood you've got here," he said to McGill, testing the weight and toughness of one of the sticks. And then he tried another.

Bats to ball players are as interesting as different makes of guns to hunters, and the players paid no attention to Stanton as he casually inspected them.

"Well, George," McGill said to the manager of the champs, as he departed for his own bench, "I'm glad you cleaned up in that world's series, because it looks like you'll never have another chance."

"So that's the way you feel about it?" Stanton replied, with a laugh at the good-natured badinage.

"We'll clean you up, sure—before the middle of September," said McGill, and they parted in friendly spirit for, perhaps, the last time that season.

In a few minutes the battle was on, the beginning being a verbal war between McGill and Stanton, each accusing the other of stealing his stuff. Stanton was fully aware that the Bluelegs were using his brands of hunches. It waged hot and heavy, the players fighting as if the championship depended on that one game. So effective had been the pitching of Jimmy Dugan and his opponent, that the score was tied at the end of the eighth inning. The blow-up came in the first half of the ninth, when Dineen, the Bluelegs' shortstop, kicked a slow grounder all over the turf, and the champs got a runner home from third.

That proved to be the deciding play, as the Bluelegs, in their half, were helpless. Not a man got to first.

Jack McGill, a hard loser at all times, viciously kicked over the bat bag before gathering up the sticks for a melancholy departure to the clubhouse, and —something fell out. The Bluelegs' manager turned pale with rage, and with a leap started for the champs' bench. But for the intercession of the older players, he would have punched George Stanton in the eye.

The object that had fallen from the bat bag was the stiffened form of a dead English sparrow!

Jack needed no explanation. He now understood the object of Stanton's friendly call.

"That's a fine piece of work to pull in my ball yard," he screamed at Stanton across the intervening space. "Pretty low-down stuff for a man who calls himself leader of the world's champions. Get out of the way," he yelled to the peace-making players. "I'm going to bust him in the jaw."

"Fine lot of bone in your head," taunted Stanton. "Steal my hunches, and then think you can get away with it, eh."

By this time the fans were swarming over the field, and the belligerent managers were kept apart for the rest of the day. The bitterness of feeling did not abate overnight, however.

Jimmy Dugan sighted a load of empties on the way to the park the next afternoon, and with the glad tidings to cheer them on, the Bluelegs struck a hitting stride and won easily. The series resulted in a dead heat, each team winning two games.

And thus it went to near the end of the season, when but two games separated the Bluelegs and the champs. They were up at the top all by themselves. The other six clubs were so far away as to make that part of the race laughable.

As the end drew near, McGill's men had become abject slaves to the spirit of superstition—hunches, jinxes, and mystic charms. But all to no avail. Apparently there was no way of catching up those two games. No matter how easily and consistently the Bluelegs managed to defeat the weaker clubs, Stanton's club would manage to win on the same days. If the champs happened to drop a game, the Bluelegs would also drop one. Four times within ten days there had been chances for McGill's club to close up the gap by winning, but, somehow, they could not put it over. Moreover, the Bluelegs went a whole week without a single player having spied a load of empty barrels, and Dahmbusch's magic tie was beginning to fray at the edges in exact proportion to the fraying of the chances to win the flag.

As a matter of fact the club was tiring under the physical strain, but this had not occurred to the usual farseeing McGill. He was working his best pitchers to death. Superstition had him so firmly in its grasp that he attributed it all to an unseen jinx. He became peevish and fretful.

"Boys," he announced in the clubhouse as the team was starting on its last fifteen games, "we are jinxed, and there's nothing to it. Somebody on this club has crossed us. If we ain't jinxed, tell me why it is that nobody has seen a load of empty barrels for a week."

"I can't figure it," agreed Larry Hennessey. "But I do know that I couldn't make a hit, it seems like, with a pencil and paper if all I had to do was mark it down."

"Wait a minute," interrupted McGill, a new thought striking him. "Dahmbusch, didn't you refuse to kick in for that fund for the shipwrecked survivors?"

"I was broke," said the German, in defense, "and I had to send money back home."

"I don't suppose you could have borrowed?" snarled Jimmy Dugan.

"I never did," Wienie replied. "But I've done some lending, and I don't have to go far to show where I lent it. Besides, I ain't seen nobody else on this club wearing a red-and-yellow tie to keep off what you fellows call the jinxes."

With that Dahmbusch leaned back against his locker, exhausted. It was his longest speech of the year, and the players looked at him, half startled.

"Lay off that argument, you fellows," McGill ordered. "I'm not taking any sides, but I don't mind telling you that I never saw a ball club win when it had a guy in the regular line-up who was short—a tightwad." His glance at Dahmbusch indicated plainly just who he meant.

"But, boss, I could tell you some things he did do," interposed Spud Monahan, who had been listening.

"Shut up, Spud! You're too fresh!"

Crushed for the moment, the little shaver sneaked out of the clubhouse, motioning for Dahmbusch to follow. As they walked across the field—this ill-mated pair—a scheme was floated which ball players to this day claim to be the biggest idea ever launched to win a pennant. The finishing touches were put on at the Monahan flat that night.

"Spud," the big fellow announced at supper, "these fellows have got a notion in their heads that they ain't going to win, and if they keep on thinking that way, they won't. That's what comes of believing in these jinxes and things. I may not be a quick-thinking ball player, as the papers say, but I ain't as crazy

as them guys. If I had the money, I believe I could win this pennant."

"The boss said you could borrow, didn't he?" asked the mascot.

There was no reply. Evidently Wienie had not heard him. He was all absorbed in a new phase of his plan. Suddenly he left the table and went to his room, where Spud could see him writing. Laboriously, Dahmbusch was composing a note which he presently folded and handed to Spud for immediate delivery.

Within a few days things began to break right for the Bluelegs.

"Fellows, we've got 'em now," shouted Larry Hennessey on the second day of the Sea Gull series, as he bounded into the clubhouse. "Coming up on the Eighth Avenue car, I just seen the biggest load of empty barrels in the world."

"I thought so," smiled Jimmy Dugan. "I was just noticing that my old soup bone was feeling right for pitching a good game."

That being enough hunch for Jack McGill, Dugan was sent in for the opener, and the Bluelegs won in a romp. But that was not the important news of the day. On the same afternoon, out West, the champs had dropped a game, and McGill's team was now within one game of the leaders. The long deadlock in the official standing of the club had been broken.

It was the same story the next day with slight variation. The variation was that McGill, himself, had seen the load of empties this time. His announcement threw the clubhouse into genuine enthusiasm. To make sure that it did not die out, Wienie Dahmbusch stuck his red-and-yellow tie in the hip pocket of his uniform, allowing the red to show occasionally, and give his teammates courage. It was another victory.

For four days this spurt kept up, a different player seeing the barrels each day. The Sea Gulls lost the entire series of four games, and the race was now a dead heat.

The Grays came to town next, and on the morning of the first game a load of empties was spied by the entire bunch of Bluelegs as they stood on the curb in front of the hotel. McGill's men had the fever now, and nothing could stop them. They took another four straight from the Grays. Having lost two games, the champs, in the meantime, had dropped behind, and reports from the West said that George Stanton was nothing less than a wild man. He went so far as to accuse the Sea Gulls and Grays of throwing games to the Bluelegs, the newspapers making a sensation of it.

"Let him rave," McGill advised his players. "It only shows we've got his goat. When they pull that old stuff about games being thrown, they're done."

During all this spell of enthusiasm, Wienie Dahmbusch had not opened his mouth. He was doing his part of the hitting, however, and the players had let up on their railing at him for being a tightwad.

Four of the last games were with the champs, and, as Stanton's club was now two games behind, it would be necessary for him to win four straight to get well in front. In case of an even break, the Bluelegs would still be two games in the lead.

For the ninth day in succession the empty barrels had been sighted, this time almost in front of the park. Jimmy Dugan first saw them and made every player come to the window and take a look. There was no beating them then. And, to make it more certain, the truckload of empties had mysteriously disappeared when the champs drove up in their taxicabs.

Already goaded by the shots of the press, George Stanton, on the field, was almost insane. His judgment was gone completely. Then, to rub it in, some

one had placed a canary bird, cage and all, on the visitors' bench, with a card declaring it to be a present from the admirers of the champs in the hostile town.

In a frenzy Stanton hurled the cage into the grand stand. The bird escaped and was caught later by Spud Monahan and taken home. But he was careful not to touch the bird until after the game.

It was such an easy victory for the Bluelegs that Stanton wasn't able to make a sound kick of any description. There was still one chance, but George showed that he was losing confidence. The many jinxes had taken all hope out of his players.

When the Bluelegs began dropping into the clubhouse for the next and all-important game, not only one, but two, truckloads of empty barrels stood against the curb, directly in front of the clubhouse. When the last player arrived, they suddenly disappeared, as on the day before.

"How many times is that we've seen them barrels?" asked Hennessey, during the jubilation over the wonderful occurrence.

"Somebody has seen a load every day for nearly two weeks," McGill figured; "and that's the world's record. We must have pulled something to cause the luck to shift our way.

"And still some folks won't believe there's something in hunches," he added, a bit sarcastically, as he glanced toward the silent Dahmbusch, busily engaged in placing the red-and-yellow tie in his hip pocket, so that just a little of the red end would show.

Spud Monahan, in the meantime, had engaged a dozen boys with slingshots to keep sparrows off the field. They wouldn't even permit one to sit on the grand-stand roof. Conditions were perfect.

The champs made a hard fight, but it was unavailing. The jinx killers of the Bluelegs were putting up too much of an armor-plate defense.

In the first half of the seventh inning, Stanton did manage to get a man on third, with one out, and there was a chance of tying the score. The next batter, though, smashed a long line fly straight into Wienie Dahmbusch's hands, and, with a perfect throw, the German nailed the runner at the plate by eight feet. That blow killed the champs. They never rallied again.

The few remaining games were played out as a matter of form. It was impossible for Stanton's club to catch up. It was also noticeable that no more empty barrels were seen, but that didn't matter now.

All over the country McGill was being played up in the newspapers as the "Magic McGill." In some way they had learned of his unbending faith in superstitious charms. Psychologists, clairvoyants, and astrologers were given all the space they wanted to show how and why these charms had worked.

Just as the season was closing and the players were beginning to figure on the world's series, McGill, seated in his private office, heard a commotion outside in the locker rooms, where the players were dressing.

"All I want is me money," he heard a strange, gruff voice saying, "and I wants it right now. You may kid some people, but you can't kid me."

He could detect a mumble of explanation, but apparently it was not satisfying.

"You didn't say nothing about me having to wait when you hired me," the gruff voice continued.

McGill opened the door slightly that he might better hear. As he did so, Wienie Dahmbusch pushed through it and entered.

"Boss," the big German began, "I'll do that borrowing now. Let me have seventy-five dollars."

"Seventy-five bucks? Holy mackerel, Wienie, what's the idea?"

"I'll tell you what's the idea," answered the gruff voice as its owner unceremoniously walked in. This stranger looked to Jack, as he often has said since, like the biggest man in the world. He wore a cap, an overall jumper, and in his mouth was stuck a short bulldog pipe. On appearances he could have licked four ball players with one hand tied behind him.

"The idea is," he said, with a meaning leer, "I want my dough. Show me something. This guy hired me to drive a load of empty barrels up this street every day until he orders me to stop, and I can prove it by your little fellow here"—he indicated Spud—"who rode in one of the empties so as to show me where to stop. It may be crazy stuff, but that ain't gettin' me nothin'. I wants my dough."

By this time every ball player in the clubhouse had gathered around the doorway, most of them with nothing more than towels around their shoulders.

McGill didn't have seventy-five dollars with him. Between thoughts of his fallen idols and how to put this fellow off, he was speechless.

"Do I get it?" snapped the truckman.

"You certainly do, old boy," spoke up Larry Hennessey, "and I don't think Wienie ought to stand it all, at that." Larry picked up a derby hat. "Here, fellows, open up your lockers and chip in. This guy has won us the pennant."

"And we always called that Dutchman a bone!" Jack McGill half muttered. "Wait a minute," he called to the truckman.

As the man hesitated, McGill walked over to Dahmbusch's locker and snatched at the red-and-yellow tie.

"I'm going to make you a little present."

"No, you ain't," objected Wienie, holding to the other end of it. "I bought this, boss, and I'd like to keep it for luck."

THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM

THERE is in a New England university a learned and revered professor who is a genius on mathematics. He devotes all his intellect to this specialty, and none of it to his personal appearance—with the result that he wears his hair so long that it reaches to his shoulders, and his suits of clothes are not renewed every season.

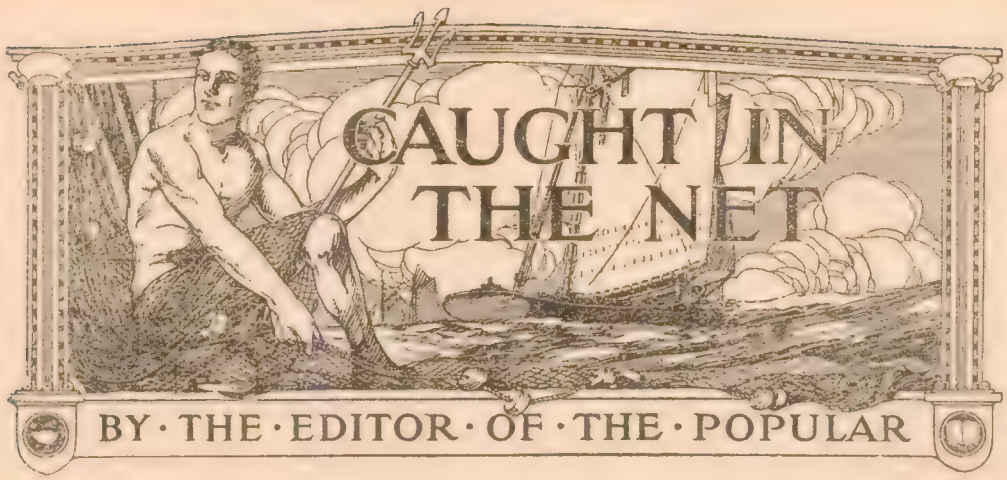
One afternoon, when he was pacing in profound contemplation the streets of the small town where the university was located, two girls, aged eleven and twelve respectively, shouted to him three times the question:

"Say, old man! Why don't you get your hair cut?"

When the query was repeated for the third time, the professor, having passed the house, turned on his heel and went back and rang the doorbell. The mother of the two girls answered the ring.

"Madam," said the professor in an indignant tone, "as I was passing this house, these two young ladies, without being accosted by me, shouted to me this question: 'Why don't you have your hair cut?'"

"Well," replied the mother, saying what first popped into her mind, "why don't you?"



THE GENTLE ART OF ADVERTISING

NO longer is the automobile, with a half dozen cylinders and six inches of plush, to be considered simply a luxury, a mere joy craft.

Yesterday we counted eleven, each bearing on its side a permanent name plate as large as a slab of a barn door, advertising the owner's business.

One read:

G. PETERS.
Fancy Groceries.
Phone 84.

Another:

F. B. WILHITE,
Real Estate & Loans.
WAHOO BUILDING.

Well, why not? We see no objection to the owners of machines getting enough advertising out of them to help pay for the gasoline. The railroads have long helped keep the wolf from the door by selling wall space of their waiting rooms. The street cars have insisted, at so much an insist, that passengers smoke Bugoon Cigars and stop at Hootman's Hotel. And there is no good reason why the windows of observation cars and the nicely varnished side of the family automobile should go to waste.

Ten years ago it was not uncommon to see some grouch fling a newspaper or magazine across the room and swear that he would read no blamed paper that was two-thirds advertising. Now readers begin to read their magazines at the back, and feel real peeved when good advertising space is taken up by a serial by B. M. Bower or Sir Gilbert Parker.

People like advertising. It has become good literature and art; besides, it appeals to the shopping instinct. Next to the instinct of self-preservation, that shopping instinct is the strongest. In fact, it is a good deal the same.

Not only are we willing to read advertisements, but millions of us pay every night at the picture shows for the privilege.

A well-known humorist is just now drawing a right handsome salary on a trip around the world for backing up against the Pyramids and having his

picture taken while he smokes Stringer's Tobacco, and standing by the Taj Mahal brushing his teeth with an Oh Clean 'Em Tooth Brush.

No doubt before long the vaudeville houses will include in their programs a number or two like "The Noon Hour at Hobson's Store," or "Shopping at Milton's." The orchestra, too, might include in their programs a symphony "Representing the Music of the Machines at Swirle's Sewing Machine Factory," or "The Long March of the Happy Employees Coming from the Mayflower's Shoe Factory at Closing Time."

And why not make the so-called business suit a real business suit by having the tailor work on the sleeve of the coat in white thread, like an old-fashioned sampler:

Buy Florida Land.
M. HUMMER.

Or across the band above the pocket print in gold letters:

Do your banking here.

THE PASSING OF THE TICKET SCALPER

THE railroad ticket scalper has been eliminated after more than ten years of constant warfare waged by the transportation lines. Ticket scalping was buying and selling secondhand railroad tickets at cut rates. For many years before the principal railways of the United States banded together to destroy the practice, it was said that hundreds of thousands of dollars every year were diverted from their passenger revenues by systematic methods of fraud in which forgery and the criminal manipulation of tickets and passes were usual and ordinary features.

The dishonest scalpers did not confine themselves to buying up round-trip excursion tickets at reduced rates and selling them at a profit. They would plug the punch holes in expired tickets, alter the description of passengers—as shown on descriptive tickets—and punch new limits and descriptions as desired; they would alter the names of stations to which the tickets were originally issued, thereby enhancing their value. By replugging and alterations one ticket would be made to serve for many trips.

One ticket scalper, who had been in business for thirty-five years, said when closing his offices, in 1906—he had a chain of them extending from Maine to California: "The ease with which tickets can be manipulated and their value increased is appalling. It is possible for a broker to make a twenty-dollar ticket good for seventy-five dollars, and to make a fifty-cent ticket into a ten-dollar one. The brokers use acids to make erasures, rubber type, and all the paraphernalia for alterations."

Ticket forging became such a common practice that many offices were equipped with what was called a "laundry"—a room where alterations could be made as required. One scalper boasted: "Give me any kind of a ticket with enough coupons on it, and I'll make it good for a ride around the world."

The Railway Ticket Protective Bureau was organized by the principal lines in the United States in February, 1903, for the purpose of detecting and prosecuting forgers, counterfeiters, and unlawful manipulators of railway tickets or other evidences of transportation. The passenger earnings of American rail-

roads at that time were nearly $550,000,000 a year. It started a general fight against all ticket scalpers. In the next ten years it succeeded in breaking up all their organizations. It has secured, in a majority of the States, the enactment of laws against ticket scalping, and has seen that they have been rigidly enforced. It has obtained the conviction and imprisonment of many individuals and gangs of ticket forgers and counterfeiters, and has recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of tickets stolen from stations. Ticket scalping, if it is carried on at all nowadays, is conducted surreptitiously. It practically has ceased to exist.

THE WORM THAT WRIGGLED

[*What the women of our time desire is admirable beyond our praise. But they overstate. All life could be attacked in the drastic terms with which certain of their champions attack the old-fashioned home, economic dependence, and the selfishness of the male. The following paragraph was written not as an appeal from their most righteous emancipation, but as a mild protest against their use of overstatement. Perhaps many readers will point out that the very thing the writer decries is the instrument he employs—overstatement. With this commentary the editor leaves the rest to his public.*]

AS for man, his days are as a tale that is told. He makes bricks without straw, and watches the whirling of the wheels of a machine. He breaks his fresh manhood on monotony. From raw material to faulty product, he deals in a process that is perishing. In the gray morning he goes to his work heavily, and at nightfall he returns from it, wearied. It is little of the sunshine that he sees. He batters at locked gates of the universe. He cannot enter it. He wanders bewildered and humbled by life, unwitting what the league of the elements is intending, till he bows his head in age because of the unrequited years.

For long he has been enslaved by woman. He fights in harsh ways for the gold which gives her leisure and protection. To what end? That she may live her life unfettered. She drives him to his joyless toil, and hobbles him in routine, till the hours of the day are dreary in his sight, and he trails home bitter at twilight. She makes of him a clerk that she may be a creator. All the sum of his toiling is that the woman may have peace. Poor drone of the human hive. There is for him no flash of golden wings in the upper sunshine. He is the unregarded part of a cosmic process.

His child is a stranger to him, and he seems to his child a chance visitor unrelated to comforts and merriment. Guarded by man's strength and sheltered by man's bounty, the woman enjoys all the bright waking hours of the little life, and receives the matchless gift of its love.

TALKING 3,400 MILES

YOU can now telephone from New York to San Francisco. This 3,400-mile line was officially opened January 25th of this year. If it were possible to make the air carry sound that far, it would take about forty-five minutes for the waves to travel between those two cities. That, however, is the stagecoach speed of sound. Over the wire the passage of the voice is

practically instantaneous—a fraction of a second, so small that it can hardly be measured.

The inaugural ceremonies, in the offices of the telephone company in New York City, were interesting, but, like the crowning of most great achievements, were simple. Always the quest is more impressive than the accomplishment—the race more thrilling than the prize.

On a platform at one end of the rather small room sat Professor Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone. On either side of him were the mayor of the city of New York, some members of his cabinet, and three officers of the telephone company. Some one nodded that San Francisco was on the wire, and Professor Bell took up the transmitter. The hundred or so invited guests half expected his first words over the longest telephone line in the world to be historic in their eloquence. One always looks for such things on such occasions.

Nearly forty years ago, when Bell and his assistant, Thomas A. Watson, were experimenting in a boarding house in Boston, the first spoken words ever carried over a wire were when Bell called to Watson, who was in another part of the house: "Watson, come here. I want you!"

On this occasion last January Watson was once more at the other end of the line, but in San Francisco, the breadth of the continent away. Professor Bell said: "Watson! Are you there? Can you hear me?"

There was a second's silence, and then Bell glanced to those about his ruddy face—framed with snow-white hair—aglow with pleasure. "He says he can hear me perfectly," he remarked. "Isn't this wonderful, Watson?" he went on. "Do you remember—long ago?"

Later Professor Bell made a little speech. A reproduction of the first crude instrument that he talked through that spring evening in Boston when the telephone was born was before him. He talked simply, as if thinking aloud. Again and again he picked up the cumbersome wooden box, looked at it, and put it down. At the end he stood silent as he gazed again at the first telephone that the world ever knew. His voice shook a little. He said, as if to himself:

"And to think that this dream has become a reality! Isn't it wonderful!"

KISMET

WE analyze the ills of life, as if we had hold of a piece of dead matter, while all the time life is in motion. There is a blight in our modern worry about our sins.

But our mistakes are casual. We make loud lament over burned fingers and slighted loves, but really we obey our instincts in spite of heartbreak. Nature has had her purpose served from Adam all the way. She has tumbled out her teeming generations with never a ripple of backwash. She has got her race increased and multiplied in careless abundance. Her fertility has populated all the green spaces, and now begins to crowd out over the polar floe. The little mishaps that trip her children and set them grieving do not concern her immense vigor. See the race coming along through the ages, spreading itself in gigantic plenty. If we happen to be one of the diseased or divorced or submerged by-products, so be it. Nature does not waste a single thought on our mangled life, so why should we?

The Man Who Could Do Everything

By Albert Payson Terhune

Author of "The Fate Chaser," "An Amateur War Lord," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

Of the three men, only Milwood attracted notice in the metropolis for brilliance and enterprise. Craig was a promising metallurgist, while the other man of the trio, Keeler, was in the district attorney's office, his hobby criminology, but his disposition diffident. The same night that Milwood invites Craig to a dinner party, Keeler calls. Being shy, Keeler tells the Japanese servant that he will wait in the back hall until Milwood is disengaged. While there Keeler suddenly becomes aware of a tiny, far-off voice threatening to kill someone. He is startled into listening for more. Nothing but a buzzing noise rewards him. Then, quite as suddenly as before, he hears an echo of fierce altercation. Near as he can judge they are the voices of his two friends, Craig and Milwood, hotly arguing over a crooked deal. Again, there is a threat of death, and Craig leaves the distant room, apparently. Now a woman's voice is mingled with that of Milwood. She pleads for her father. Milwood answers by making violent love to the woman; he suggests that they run off together. She replies that her husband would kill Milwood if he knew of his treachery. At this moment Ichi, the Jap servant, interrupts the tense dialogue to tell the woman—Mrs. Van Vleck—that her sister suggests it is time to leave. Keeler hears the woman swish out of the room and then hears Milwood curse Ichi and knock him down. Thoroughly alarmed, Keeler leaves his place in the back hall and slips away, but not before discovering that he had overheard all these things through a disused speaking-tube. Interested in just such problems Keeler makes notes of the extraordinary number of threats and dangers hanging over Milwood's head. Nevertheless, he is startled next morning to read glaring headlines announcing the murder of Milwood, whose body has been found with a silver bullet through the head and the face disfigured beyond recognition from sulphuric acid burns. Keeler makes up his mind to try his hand at solving the mystery. Ichi is being held as suspect. Going to headquarters, Keeler requests Chief Pyne to accompany him to the scene of crime. Keeler examines the body and the premises and makes a discovery. He turns to Pyne with the conclusion that the Jap is innocent. "You can let him go free!" he says to the bewildered chief of police.

(In Four Parts—Part Two)

CHAPTER X.

THE MUD'S STORY.

"NO; Ichi didn't kill Milwood," reiterated Keeler.

"Oh, he didn't, eh!" snapped Police Chief Pyne. "Then who in thunder did?"

"I don't know. I don't believe anybody will ever know." He was staring, slack-jawed, at the body.

Gradually the new look of admiration and respect on Pyne's face was beginning to fade.

"Well?" queried the chief.

Keeler did not answer. Stupidly he stood there; his eyes dull.

"Does that mean you're going to quit, Mr. Keeler?" inquired Pyne, trying to revive the other's interest by elephantine sarcasm. "You've found this case harder than you supposed when you first tackled it? And you don't feel called upon to tax your brain by struggling with such a tough problem? I don't blame you."

Keeler mumbled something unintelligible.

"I've only this to say," Pyne went on, the sarcasm gone from his voice, leaving it peevish—"I've only this to say, and that is, you've fooled me. I thought you were 'there.' That's because I watched you playing a game I'm no good at. I don't claim to be particularly brilliant or quick-witted. So those

This story began in the POPULAR dated May 23rd, still procurable at the news stands.

pretty tricks of observation and rapid-fire deduction you produced for my benefit took me in. They made me think you were just the man to push this case through to a conviction. But now you're playing *my* game. The 'plug, plug' kind. As a sure-fire detective, you're only a false alarm, after all."

Keeler glanced slowly around at him.

"I never claimed to be a detective," he said. "I'm just——"

"You can back out of this now, if you like," Pyne continued, with mounting heat, "but I'm going to stick till I find out who murdered Milwood. I've tackled it. And I'm going to see it through. Not only because it's my job, but because it's my *way*. That's what's earned me the place I'm in: the fact that I don't let go of any case I once take hold of until I've gone as far as the trail goes."

"Chief!" Keeler broke in.

The other, partly in anger, partly in illustration of his boasted tenacity, had clenched one beefy fist.

"Do that again, will you?" Keeler requested, with charming irrelevance.

The chief stared blankly at him.

"Do what again?"

Keeler pointed to his hand.

"Just close that once more for me," he repeated.

Pyne's eyes went slowly to his hand, now hanging relaxed at his side. And slowly, with brows bent over the task, he covered his palm with his fingers. The result was the loose, awkward grip in which a man might hold a live sparrow. Following the operation intently, Keeler nodded.

"What's the idea?" asked Pyne.

"Thanks," Keeler said, with a return of the absent-minded glaze to his eyes. "That's what I thought."

"Thought *what?*"

"Nothing," was the abstracted reply. "I—I'm trying to think."

"You asked me to clench my fist," persisted the chief. "Was it a trick or a joke or—what? What's it got to do with——"

Keeler started out of his reverie once more.

"I guess it hasn't anything to do with it," he agreed.

"Well," grunted Pyne. "I've no time to loaf around asking fool questions. I'm going to get busy here. As long as you're out of it——"

"Out of it?" repeated Keeler, looking blank.

"You said," retorted the chief, "that you didn't know who murdered him. And that you didn't think anybody would ever know. The case is too much for you. So if that means you're going off it——"

"Chief," Keeler earnestly assured him, "I was never more 'on' it than I am at this minute. Please believe that. You've got me all wrong. But," he went on, with a timid man's willingness to share all the blame in a conversational misunderstanding, "that's my fault. I should have expressed myself differently. I—I shouldn't have said that at all. I should have kept it to myself. But it was sort of jarred out of me by the surprise I got——"

Pyne was eying him; his scorn for Keeler's supposed quitting under fire changing to a frown of mystification.

"I'm glad you aren't dropping out," he said encouragingly. "Because you made a hit with me by the way you took hold. I can't see what makes you think this case is going to be so difficult to solve, anyway. You haven't been here twenty minutes. In that time you've discovered that the rug under the body, there, was tacked down. That it was done by the murderer, to hide where the spattering of the vitriol, that cut his victim's face away, had burned the floor beneath him. And—well, that's about all, isn't it? Except the good tips you gave me on Ichi. But what about the silver bullet? And what about the murderer's get-away? You said the

body's lying so close to the door that Ichi had to shove it aside when he came into the room would keep the murderer from going out through the same door. You're sure——"

"That is true," Keeler assented. "You see, chief, if the body was found lying almost directly against that shut door, the murderer couldn't have passed through it, shut the door, and laid the body where it was discovered."

"Well?" prompted Pyne.

Keeler glanced around the room. His eyes traveled to the raftered ceiling of cement, and thence to the four latticed windows.

"Sure," nodded the chief, following the direction of his glance. "That's the only way he could have taken. The window I looked at has a sheer drop of twenty feet to the ground. Now, let's see——"

"Then," said Keeler briskly, "the same thing must be true of the window beside it. A man—er—couldn't jump twenty feet without breaking something, I suppose?"

"Both legs, probably," the chief curtly agreed.

"Yes," said Keeler thoughtfully. "Then it's the other two windows we'd better investigate. There may be a drainpipe, or something of the sort, that he could have used to climb down by."

Pyne, crossing the room a step or two in advance of him, pushed up first one and then the other of the two latticed windows on the north side of the room. Keeler, as he put his head and shoulders through one window, beheld the same amount of Pyne's anatomy extended, Punch-and-Judy fashion, through the other. And Pyne, in significant silence, was pointing a stubby forefinger at a tin pipe which ran down the side of the house, between them, to the ground.

"Would it hold a man's weight, do you think?" Keeler questioned.

By the way of answer, Pyne grasped the drainpipe in both hands and shook it—or exerted all his strength to do so. The pipe gave back not a tremor to the strenuous tugging.

"That's the way our man took," commented Pyne, with grim conviction.

Keeler, leaning farther out over the sill, was looking down at a moistly trampled space on the turf of the side lawn at the end of the drainpipe. The chief's eyes followed his.

"Look!" Pyne exclaimed suddenly. "This is the way he took. See the muddy footprints going down the side of the pipe?"

Keeler shook his head.

"What's the matter?" blurted the chief. "That's the way the man took, I tell you. But you don't have to take my word for it. Use your eyes. You don't want any more evidence, do you, that this is the way he went down?"

"Chief," said Keeler, with an unwonted touch of impatience, "why don't *you* use your eyes? There's mud on the ground, down there. But there's none in this room."

"What of that? He——"

"And another thing. When a man climbs a pipe, or anything of that sort, he uses his feet to aid his hands in making the ascent. But when he comes down, his legs are usually wrapped around the pipe to steady him. His feet don't need to come into it at all. Those muddy footprints don't show me that a man went down this pipe. But only that a man most certainly came *up* it!"

"And never came into the room at all?"

"He brought no mud in."

"But why, man? *Why?* It's silly! We're looking for the way the man got out. And——"

"And, instead, we've found the way he got in? Fifty men may or may not have shinned down that pipe, to get out.

But it's a certainty they all did it before the murderer climbed up."

"How do you make that out?"

"Once more, chief, if you won't mind my suggesting it, why not use your eyes? It isn't a Sherlock Holmes problem. It's just a bit of observation. See that mud? The patch of it just below you, for instance."

"Yes," grumbled Pyne, staring sullenly at a thick smear of dried earth the size of a man's palm. "What about it?"

"It is nearly half an inch thick, and its edges on one end are curled upward, almost to a sharp line."

"Well?"

"Would it look like that if a man's body or even a child's body had rubbed against it, sliding down the pipe?"

"N-no," vouchsafed Pyne. "It'd be flatter'n a sheet of paper. I see. But—but I *don't* see."

"Don't see what?"

"It's all impossible!" snorted the chief. "We've shown the murderer couldn't have gotten out by the door unless he'd reached his arm in afterward and pulled the body up close to the jamb. And there'd be no motive in doing that. Nobody but a fool would have thought of doing it. So he got out by the window and the water pipe. It's the only other way out. And here you've proved, clear as day, that he *couldn't* have slid down by way of the water pipe, without his body rubbing off the mud marks. And the mud marks aren't rubbed off."

"Yes," assented Keeler dully.

"Then," fumed the chief, "the case stands like this: A man shinned up the water pipe. His shoes were covered with mud. He stopped outside the sill and rubbed every bit of mud off his shoes, so that not a scrap of it could get on this floor. Then he killed Milwood and poured acid on him and tacked a rug over the acid stains and laid the body close to the door; and—and melted away, or else made his trip down the pipe again, in the dark, dodging every piece of mud he'd left there. It's a dandy story, isn't it—for the foolish house!"

"It's an impossibility," supplemented Keeler. "And yet—it's the nearest possible solution. Unless——"

He pulled forward a chair, stood on it, and pushed at the transom above the door. He could not move it. He fumbled at its catch. It did not help him to stir the glass-lined frame.

"Transom, hey?" cried Pyne. "Good idea!"

"No," contradicted Keeler. "It isn't a good idea. It isn't even a bad idea. It's no idea at all. The transom won't move."

He carried his chair out into the hall and mounted it again.

"Nailed shut," he reported. "Putty all over both nails, to keep the light-gray tone of the woodwork from being broken by the rusty heads of nails. So much for that theory."

"That proves it," said Pyne, in heavy irony. "He didn't get out by the door or by the transom or by the window. So he just stood in the middle of the room and flapped his arms a couple of times and crowed; and then vanished. It's simple."

"Chief," said Keeler plaintively, "did you ever read any of our great detective stories?"

"Sure! They're the nicest fairy tales ever. I love 'em. Why?"

"Because," said Keeler, in genuine regret, "I wish I was one of the marvelous detectives in those books. With a magnifying glass and a set of deductions and the dust on the floor, I'd have the whole thing worked out by now. And," with a heartfelt sigh, "*I* don't even own a magnifying glass. And I wouldn't know how to detect clews with one if I had it. I'm just a dub. As Milwood once told me I was."

CHAPTER XI.

CRAIG TALKS—AND WON'T TALK.

Leaving the house of death, Keeler declined the chief's invitation to ride back to headquarters with him in his car—a sore temptation, for he had not ridden in an automobile four times in his colorless life—and, saying he had an appointment and would return later to headquarters, set off down the street afoot.

At the first drug store he turned in and made for the solitary telephone booth the place contained. A fat woman was occupying it. And she continued to occupy it for an interminable time; making grotesque mouths as she talked, and now and then tossing her head coquettishly.

Keeler mentally cursed the dire disease of telephonitis and fumed like a leashed dog that is balked at the very start of the scent. After an æon or so, the woman emerged, leaving the stuffy booth redolent of cheap perfume and a white dab of nose powder on the black rubber top of the transmitter.

Keeler bolted into the scarce-vacated cubby-hole as might a rabbit into its burrow; and actually summoned enough brazenness to shove aside a pasty-faced youth who was edging toward the booth. So harsh an action, on Keeler's part, was equivalent to a street fight to an ordinary man.

He was in the booth and had shut the door behind him before he realized that he did not know the "number" of the man he wanted to call; and the telephone book was on a stand outside the booth. Also that the pasty-faced boy was loitering alertly in the space between booth and book.

Keeler emerged from the booth. The boy bounded wrigglingly into his place.

"Excuse me," Keeler timidly addressed him, "but it's only fair to advise you to wipe off the transmitter carefully before you use the telephone. I'm supposed to be perfectly well again—in fact, I'm discharged as cured. But after smallpox there's always likely to be——"

The boy waited to hear no more of the faltering warning. If the booth had been in flames he could not have departed from it more promptly. He circled Keeler widely, and left the store at a rate no sprinter of the Half Moon Club's track team need have despised.

Keeler looked up Craig's office number in the gray telephone book. Then, this time carrying the book along with him, he reëntered the booth; right ungallantly taking precedence over a sweet young thing who had just come into the store, and, rapt-eyed, was bearing down upon the hapless telephone.

He called up Craig's office; only to learn that the metallurgist had not come to work that morning, but had sent word that a heavy cold would keep him at home. Keeler, fumbling the book's greasy leaves in the half light of the booth, managed to decipher the number of Craig's house telephone and called him up.

In a voice that bore no audible traces of a cold, Craig replied to his hail.

"This is Keeler," announced the little man. "Heard about Milwood?"

"I read it a few minutes ago," came the reply. "It's a ghastly thing."

"I've just come from his house," went on Keeler. "Can I drop over to your rooms, on my way back to New York? There are one or two new discoveries about the case I'd like to tell you."

"Why should you wish to tell them to *me?*" demanded Craig ungraciously.

"Only that we three were from the same place and he was a friend of yours, and——"

"He wasn't!" snapped Craig.

"And," mildly added Keeler, "you were one of the last people who saw him alive. I supposed you'd be interested to hear——"

"Oh, all right. Come on."

Keeler made his way to New York and to Washington Square, where, in a rambling old bachelor apartment house, Alan Craig had a suite of rooms. Craig himself came to the door of the apartment to admit him. If the host's voice gave no token of the cold he was supposed to have, his face, at least, was that of a decidedly sick man. It was gray and haggard, and his eyes were bloodshot.

He had not yet shaved, and there was a tousled air about him, as of one who has slept in his clothes. This supposition was, of course, quite untenable, since the evening suit he had worn at the Milwood dinner had been changed for loose brown tweeds.

Craig held the stump of a chewed cigar between his teeth. He seemed anything but glad to see Keeler; and his customary pleasant demeanor toward the little man was replaced by something very like gruffness.

"Come in!" he vouchsafed, leading the way to a living room that reeked with both fresh and stale smoke.

"You look sick," commented Keeler, as he followed the big fellow into the room and perched himself on the edge of the only comfortable chair in sight.

"I am. Touch of malaria, I think. I'm taking the day off."

"It was a heavy cold," meekly suggested Keeler, "when you phoned your office. Whatever it is, you look all in."

"I am," said Craig, adding irritably: "Dive into one of those leather chairs —can't you?—instead of balancing yourself on that torture seat like a measly canary."

"Thanks," twittered Keeler, shifting to the recesses of a big leather armchair, opposite the window divan on which Craig had just thrown himself. He did not add that he had postponed taking a permanent seat until he could first learn what Craig's own location was to be, and how the light would strike the latter's face.

"Now, then," pursued Craig, "what new things have you heard about poor Milwood? More than the morning papers told, I mean. And how did you happen to be over at his house to-day? You said you were going on vacation."

"I was. I am. This is it. I'm on vacation now. I'm taking it by doing a little amateur work on my own account in the Milwood case. It amuses me, you know, to dig into these things. And I can't do any harm, even if I don't unearth much."

"Queer taste! I'd as soon spend a vacation in jail."

"It wouldn't be a bad place to spend one," agreed Keeler, on reflection. "A fellow could pick up a lot in jail, if he used his eyes."

"What new things about the case did you want to tell me? The papers say his butler, or valet—that Jap—is held as a witness, and that Milwood was robbed."

"He wasn't robbed," gently corrected Keeler. "At least his clothes weren't."

"How do you know?"

"I don't say his watch and rings and cash weren't stolen. But I do say they weren't taken off the body. The vest buttonhole that a watch chain passes through was buttoned. A murderer in a hurry wouldn't unbutton the vest to take out the chain and then stop to button it again. He wouldn't pull the coat back over the watch pocket again, either. The hands were clenched, too. There were no rings on them. A man who opened the fingers to steal the rings wouldn't close them again. It's the same way with the pockets. They don't gape as they would if an outsider's hand had gone through them after the man was dead."

"Milwood may have been held up, first, and forced to give his valuables to——"

"And then buttoned his vest again and——"

"No. Probably not. You're a clever

little cuss to notice such things, Keeler. You were always like that, even when you were a kid. You had a positive genius for seeing things that were in plain sight, but that nobody else ever bothered to see. I remember once, you saw——"

"Craig," shyly interrupted Keeler, "what were you quarreling about with Milwood last evening?"

Craig jumped to his feet.

"Who says I was quarreling with him?" he growled. "The police?"

"No. Oh, no. I didn't say anything to them about it. I thought I'd rather talk it over with you, first. That's the main reason I'm here."

"You said there'd been 'new discoveries'——"

"There have. I made them. I'll come to those later. But, first of all, would you mind telling me about that quarrel?"

"Why should I? What quarrel? Who's been blabbing?"

"Why, no one's been blabbing," Keeler soothed him. "No one heard it, except me. At least, I don't think any one else heard it. And I heard only snatches of it."

"Where were you?"

"Downstairs," answered Keeler, to whom it did not occur, for a moment, to make a mystery of his knowledge and thus strive to impress or scare his hearer. "I was waiting to see Milwood. I sat down in an alcove of the hall. There was a speaking tube right above me. I didn't know it was there," he hastened to say, in boyish apology, "till afterward. I didn't mean to be an eavesdropper or do anything sneaky. Honestly, I didn't. The words just seemed to come to me out of nowhere."

"And you heard——"

"I heard Milwood ask you to indorse some ore. And I heard you say it was 'salted'—whatever that means. And at first you wouldn't agree to indorse it——"

"At first?" echoed Craig, in wrathful surprise. "At *first?* What do you mean?"

"Well," said Keeler, with visible reluctance, and wiggling about in his voluminous chair seat, "I—I was pretty badly disappointed, I tell you frankly. I've—I've always liked you rather well, Craig. And I've always felt I could bank on your squareness and——"

"What on earth are you blithering about, man? As for 'squareness'——"

"It's none of my business," said Keeler deprecatingly, "so you needn't get sore. You asked the question, you know. You asked me what I meant. And since you *did* ask—I was a bit dazed at your saying you'd sell your indorsement, to that swindler, if you could get your price."

"*I?*" roared Craig. "Why, if you heard——"

"Yes, and I heard you, afterward, trying to salve your conscience with just such a rage as you're getting into now," added Keeler, standing manfully to his guns. "You said he was a 'yellow dog'—or he said you were; I couldn't make out which; and you said something about his using strong language and he threatened you—or——"

"What sort of rigmarole is this? Let's get back to the beginning. If you mean to say I consented to accept a bribe——"

"You did. You said you had your price. Then there was a buzzing and I missed some of the talk. But afterward I heard Milwood say: 'Then that's settled.' And a minute later the two of you were quarreling."

"Look here, Keeler," said Craig pleasantly, "you've got this all tangled. Will you believe me if I try to straighten it out for you?"

Craig had grown suddenly cool. Unnaturally cool, it seemed to Keeler, who was watching him closely. The man seemed to be putting a strong restraint on himself.

"Go ahead," adjured Keeler.

"Milwood wanted a statement from me. I refused. He offered me a bribe."

"I heard that much," observed Keeler.

"I told him I had my price. So he said: 'Then that's settled. How much?' And I told him: 'My price for doing the dirty work you want done is just exactly seven billion dollars.'"

"Huh?" queried Keeler, puzzled.

"You see, I'd answered him in the only language he'd understand. If I'd kept on being indignant, he'd have thought I was bluffing. I had to put the reply in terms he'd grasp. And he grasped it. Then I lost hold of myself a bit, and told him what a yellow dog he was. He warned me I was using strong language, considering there were several loaded guns in the room. And I laughed at his hint, and said I was safe enough, and that he wouldn't be such a fool as to start a murder scandal. Also that I could probably reach one of the guns as quickly as he could. It was windy talk, of course. But we were both excited."

"And that was all?"

"That was—about all."

"You're sure?"

"All that concerns anybody except a certain——"

"Miss Madge Carr?" asked Keeler innocently.

Craig turned on him in hot indignation.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"I? I don't mean anything by it. You seemed to forget the rest of your talk with Milwood, and I was trying to prompt you."

"What's that got to do with——"

"With Miss Carr? I don't know. I don't even know her, or who she is. But you and Milwood were quarreling over her."

Craig, with manifest difficulty, checked a fierce retort and said, in genuine pleading:

"Keeler, you're surely not going to tell this to the police? You're surely not going to drag her name into——

"I'm not doing anything—yet. Except to get at so much of the truth as will help me unravel this tangle. If you care to tell me——"

"I threatened to expose Milwood's mine fake," said Craig sulkily. "He told me, if I did, he'd make trouble for me with Miss Carr. He had found out, I suppose, that I care for her. It's not an easy thing to talk about to another man. I told him to leave her name out of the talk. And I told him he soiled her name by the mere mention of it. Then I got out."

"Walking around a carboy of vitriol?"

"You saw as well as heard! You said you were downstairs in the hall!"

There was almost dread in Craig's voice, as at the supernatural. But it was no part of Keeler's plan to play on such a chord. So he answered:

"I heard him warn you not to knock it over."

"Oh!" laughed Craig, relieved. "Yes. That's so. He had it up there for experiments. That was all. I went downstairs then. Afterward——"

"Afterward?"

"Afterward," finished Craig, after a pause, "I went home."

Keeler rose with a sigh.

"Craig," said he, "I'm sorry you don't think it's worth while to be more honest with me."

"Honest?" flared Craig. "I——"

"Oh, you've been honest in all you've told me. I know enough of human nature to guess when a man's lying. But you haven't told me all, or even half. Why haven't you?"

"I've told you all you had any right to ask—and more. What in blazes do you mean, Keeler, by butting in on this case? It's no affair of yours."

"I'm trying to make it my affair—as far as you're concerned—to keep it from being an affair of the police. If they know what I know, they'll arrest you."

Long and earnestly, and with troubled doubt, Craig looked at the little man who blinked up at him so friendlily. At last he said, as if on impulse:

"Oh, all right! I'll tell you what little more I know. There's no good reason why I shouldn't. You'll give me your word it won't go any farther?"

"Why, certainly. I'm not a policeman."

"Very good. What do you want to know first? About my going back to Milwood's study after the other guests left, or——"

"Suppose," ventured Keeler, "suppose you begin by telling me how I happened to find *this?* It was placed in the dead man's hand."

He drew something from his pocket and held it out on his palm for inspection. Craig stared at it as if he were in a mesmeric trance.

"How did I come to find this clenched in his hand?" asked Keeler.

Craig's knees buckled under him. He collapsed, rather than seated himself, on the divan, and buried his blanched face in both hands.

"Go, please!" he muttered hoarsely. "Go!"

CHAPTER XII.

CRAIG SHUTS UP.

Keeler hesitated an instant, his nonaggressive soul taxed to its utmost to make him remain where he was not wanted. Then he resolutely sat down again, and, with the harsh fierceness of a cornered baby rabbit, he made answer:

"I am not going. Not yet. I must get this business straight."

Craig said nothing. Overcoming his momentary emotion he straightened himself and turned a masklike, drawn face to his caller. It was evident he had himself well in hand once more; and it was also evident that his self-control was bought by tremendous will power.

"Craig," said Keeler persuasively, "you've got to tell me about this. I'm not asking through curiosity—though I'd be less—or more—than human, if I wasn't aching with curiosity about it. I'm asking for your own sake. To help you."

No reply. Keeler went on:

"Don't you see you're putting yourself in a hole? This thing I found in the dead man's hand—and your quarrel with Milwood, and your threat to kill him—and your refusal to say anything. All this is the sort of thing the police love to work on."

Craig shrugged his shoulders.

"Whatever you may say or may have said to me," promised Keeler, "I'll keep to myself. You have my word for it. But you've *got* to be frank with me. Can't you see that?"

"No," was the curt answer, "I can't! And I can't see that this affair is any of your business. You're not a cop. Keep out of it. In any case, you'll get nothing from me."

Keeler tried another tack.

"I never owned a dress suit," he said irrelevantly, "so I don't know all the wrinkles and rules of evening clothes. But I've often thought I'd like to own one if I ever get rich enough. That's why I read with a lot of interest a little pamphlet I found on a seat in the subway one night. It was published by a tailor concern and it was called 'Correct Costumes for Men.' It had pictures in it. Pictures of dandy-looking men who had no stomachs, and whose hair was brushed fine. I tried to brush my own hair like that," he added, smoothing his thinly bristling head, "but it wouldn't stay put."

Craig looked at him in frowning perplexity. Keeler continued:

"I read the part about dress suits two or three times, because I couldn't understand all of it. One thing, for instance: It said: 'Watches, watch chains and key chains are not worn with evening clothes.' That must be a misprint. Of course, a man could carry his key chain mussed up in his pocket along with his keys, where it wouldn't show. And he could carry a watch without a chain. But I'll bet anything he'd carry a watch. Now, wouldn't he? I've kind of wanted to ask somebody that knew, but I've always been afraid I'd be guyed. Don't you wear a watch with a dress suit?"

"No."

"Not at all?"

"Of course not. If you don't mind, I'd rather chat with you some other time, Keeler. I don't mean to be rude, and you're a good little chap. But I don't feel up to talking to any one to-day."

Keeler rose to go. At the door he stopped to ask:

"Then you didn't even wear your watch and chain to Milwood's last night? I don't see how you could tell what time to go home. You were in evening dress, but I'll bet you had a watch tucked away somewhere on you."

"Well, I didn't. Good-by!"

Keeler's hand dropped from the doorknob and he came back into the room.

"Then," he asked, with unwonted abruptness, once more opening his hand and disclosing the object in his palm, "how did this——"

"You're right," broke in Craig, with sudden volubility. "Quite right. You'd win the bet. I forgot. I wore my watch. I remember now—in my waistcoat pocket. The chain was on it, and stuffed into the pocket, too. I remember I pulled it out to——"

"To see the time? No, you didn't, old man. Forgive me for contradicting you, but you didn't. When you stopped to talk to me at the Half Moon Club grill, you put your hand to your pocket the way a man does when he's feeling for his watch. And then you looked all around the room till you could get a sight of the grillroom clock. I noticed, because——"

"I was wearing my watch—and my watch chain!" rasped Craig.

Keeler shook his head hopelessly, and once more changed the subject.

"Your fists are both tight clenched," he observed. "I've noticed how men's fists clench when they're telling lies. It's a funny thing," he hurried on, as Craig took an angry step toward him. "It's a funny thing how little observation most people have. For instance: When a man clenches his fist he curls the fingers inward, so that the nails touch the palm. Yet, if you should try to close up another man's fist for him you'd probably close it so the balls of the finger tips touched the palm. Like *this!*"

Craig scarcely looked. In fact, to Keeler, it seemed as though he did not look at all. So the little man once more laboriously folded his right hand's fingers, nails outward, and thrust the awkwardly doubled fist in front of Craig's eyes. The gesture bore about as much resemblance to a threat as did the bunched fingers to an ordinarily clenched fist.

"Like this!" he repeated.

"Well? What of it?"

"If you were in a rage, or in pain or excitement, or—or in a death agony, you'd never think of clenching your fist this way. Would you, now?" pursued Keeler.

"No. No one would. What does all this idiocy lead to, anyhow? And won't you clear out? I want to be alone."

"You're right," beamed Keeler. "No one would. No one of his own accord would clench his fist like this. And

yet—that's how the dead man's fist was clenched!"

He paused, with a mild effort at dramatic effect. Craig was scarcely listening. Disappointed, Keeler continued:

"His fist was closed like that. I noticed it. The police didn't. That's why I said, just now, how funny it is that most people have so little observation. The man never closed his own fist like that. It was closed for him!"

"Closed for him?"

"Yes. By some one else—after he was dead. And the same person who closed it, closed it over this thing I showed you. He put the thing in the man's hand and then closed the fingers over it. He put it there to be found. It's lucky *I* found it, eh, instead of the police?"

"And now you've found it," rapped out Craig, "what are you going to do about it?"

"*Do* about it? Why, nothing. I came here to ask *you* about it. What else should I do?"

"You're a white little man—a thoughful little man, Keeler," said Craig. "I'm sorry I was so grouchy to you. It was decent of you to hide it and bring it away. It might have caused no end of trouble."

"It might."

"But," pursued Craig, "it won't."

Taking up the object from the table—where Keeler had momentarily laid it while he was illustrating the odd method of fist clenching—Craig tossed it into the very heart of the coal fire that smoldered in the grate. Keeler took an impulsive step toward the fireplace, then paused, shrugged his shoulders, and turned again to Craig.

"How did it come to be in his dead hand?" he asked.

"I've nothing to say."

"For your own sake——"

"I've nothing to say."

"Craig, in your quarrel with Milwood, you and he spoke of one Madge Carr—as maybe I've mentioned. She was one of the subjects of your quarrel. In fact, she seemed to be the very heart of it. Who is she?"

"Leave her out of this."

"I'd like to, but I can't. She's—she's quite important. I must find her."

"You must not!"

"Who is she?"

"I can't tell you any more."

"Not even under promise of secrecy?"

"Not under any conditions at all!"

"Where does she live?"

"I shall not tell you anything. She has nothing to do with this case. You hear me? She has *nothing* to do with it!"

"Craig," said Keeler slowly, "you're talking pretty loud, and your hands are clenched pretty tight—just to tell me she has nothing to do with this. Any fool would know she had, if only from your manner. I've got to find her. I wish you'd help me."

"If you try to——"

"Don't bother to threaten me, old man," begged Keeler. "Threatened men live long. Unless they happen to be named Milwood. And even then—— Good-by!"

CHAPTER XIII.

ICHI REMEMBERS SOME DETAILS.

A Fifth Avenue bus lumbered clumsily under Washington Arch. As it swerved to complete the circle, a small Italian boy jumped from the curb to pursue a tormentor. The chauffeur jammed on the rasping, crunching brakes and brought his ponderous vehicle to a swaying stop. Then he said things.

Shrill, nerve-wracked anathemas fell on Keeler's ears. He was balancing on the bottom step of the old-fashioned, high-stooped brownstone house where Craig had his rooms.

The interview had left him without his usual clean-edged deductions. He was vague and bothered by "theories" that were as fickle to one objective point as a flighty weathercock in a high gale. Craig, inclined to be more than reticent, acted as an unlooked-for stumbling-block.

"Lemme ever catch ye under me wheels again, ye little wop, ye! I'll grind ye to a paste! I'll go wreck ye father's banana stand! I'll——"

The wild threats died upon the shifting breeze. Keeler walked to the corner. He hadn't indulged in a bus ride since last Easter, when his Cousin Hetty, from Central Valley, came to visit. On one occasion she had been his companion in a delirious feast of stewed bananas and prune salad at a physical-culture restaurant. This revelry was supplemented by a bus ride, where, between trying to keep his derby on and extracting the tip end of a persistent feather from his watering eyes, he had pointed out the homes of various millionaires—and their shortcomings, as he knew them.

A bus ride now would be just the thing for him. He would take off his furry soft hat, rest it on his knees, and let the breeze sweep the cobwebs from his brain. A bus is an unbusinesslike vehicle, he decided. It is reserved for ladies who wish they owned automobiles and men who like to smoke on the way uptown. Being neither, he censured himself as he ascended the narrow, twisting steps. But on a working vacation one may indulge in indiscretions of the milder type.

The little registering machine, gripped in the grimy palm of the conductor, snatched his dime from him in one greedy gulp. It startled him. He resented its quick decision.

He lifted his hat carefully from his head and held it pinned to his knees. A playful gust tossed a lock of his fast-thinning hair. Automatically, he replaced his hat. He knew how easily he caught cold.

The bus rolled on past a squat, white hotel, where old-fashioned full-length windows opened on to tiny iron balconies. Within could be seen groups of animated young people bent on sampling the odd dishes for which the cuisine was noted.

Keeler's eye rested with horror on the trays laden with hors d'œuvres—those fascinating appetite enticers that are consumed mainly by those whose appetites need no enticing. To Keeler, food of that caliber savored of soda mints and sanitariums.

In a sudden, guilty revulsion to duty, he drew from his pocket the sheet of club note paper on which he'd jotted down his "suspected list."

He reread Item No. 1:

Man unknown—threatened to kill Milwood—unless—unless what?—quarters—eighths—fractions. Whatever they may mean.

Any one who was sufficiently calm and scientific to hold intelligible conversation in fractions wouldn't be likely to be driven to murder that same night. He had found that there were few cold-blooded, premeditated murders in so-called "high life." They were mostly the result of wine-drenched arguments, with here and there a freak affair, such as the strange disappearance of a member of a yachting party, or an automobile accident—presumably accidental.

And yet, the fraction man, whoever he was, might have been a personality erratic enough to combine, successfully, arithmetic and assassination. But who was he? Who?

Keeler tapped the slip of paper with the silver pocket pencil his mother had given him five Christmases before. He saw with dismay that the constant wear it had received had almost obliterated his monogram—and monograms were his almost one weakness. He forgot that the oftener he personalized his

possessions by having those three letters engraved, the oftener was he likely to be asked what the middle one stood for.

The bus stopped with a sick jolt. Five seconds later, a breath of some strange perfume, suggestively Oriental, greeted his nostrils. A woman in something shimmering and pink had seated herself beside him.

Keeler shrank against the rail. His small, neat self assumed imaginary bulk and inelegance. He felt he was taking up too much of the seat; his collar button bored into his flesh; his feet, instead of resting comfortably on the floor, were balancing nervously on tiptoe. It was so that well-gowned, well-groomed, well-poised women always affected him.

He suddenly wondered whether, maybe, the surface car might not be more satisfactory; whether he could get off without disturbing anybody. He had about decided to stick it out when he caught the lady's eyes fastened on his hands.

Some one had told him, once, that he had the hand of an artist. Just at that moment he wondered how he could ever have entertained the idea. His hands were actually growing, under his horrified gaze, and the fingers had turned to the proverbial thumbs.

He did not know that a sheet of paper, covered with writing, acts as an irresistible magnet to the least curious passenger in a public vehicle. The lady had caught sight of the words, "threatened to kill," and upon this meaty nucleus had built, in one minute, a tragedy with all the weirdness of a Poe and the sincere brutality of a Gorky.

Keeler pressed the little electric button at his left and rose. He swayed down the narrow aisle, clutching his paper, bumping the shoulders of one passenger, then another, and finally reached the staircase.

Once on the curb he felt a great relief. What decision had he come to? None. He remembered that he had been shy on decisions that day. As he saw it, there was only one course to pursue.

The man who had threatened first was unknown to him. To progress at all he must discover his identity. Who knew him? Well, the only person who, logically, ought to know him was Ichi. A man's Jap servant usually knows all his friends, even those whom a master doesn't suspect he knows.

Keeler clasped the handrail as he descended the subway steps in quest of a Brooklyn express. He had tripped once, years earlier, and his accident insurance company had paid him twenty-four dollars a week for eleven days.

Chief Pyne looked up in frank surprise when the little man was ushered into his presence.

"Back again? Found something new? What's the main idea?"

Keeler looked apologetic.

"I'm sorry to report that I'm just angling, at present. I was wondering whether you'd object to letting me talk to Ichi for five minutes more. You see, I'd like to ask him a few questions which may——" he broke off suddenly. "That is, chief, if you don't think I'm imposing on your good nature. I——"

"Aw, ferget it! I'd stack you, ten to one, against the classy, gumshoe bunch I've had to deal with. Meaning no personal offense, I must say that you're the most unorthodox-looking detective I've ever seen. You look more like a—er—like a druggist, or something. But you got the goods! Sure I'll have that little brown eel brought out. Want me here?"

Keeler looked super-apologetic.

"I'd—I'd rather not—that is, if you have no objection," he added hastily.

A moment later the squat, sullen detention prisoner was brought in by an attendant.

When his glance fell upon Keeler his

taut, yellow skin eased into a half smile. But behind his eyes lurked fear of the coming interview.

"I want to find out a few unimportant things, Ichi," began the little detective gently. "Nothing to get alarmed about. Just a few names. If you can possibly remember them, I'd advise you to do so, because, you see, the more names you remember the less chance—the less chance——"

Ichi flashed comprehension. His square, sinewy hands, with their square-tipped fingers, hung calmly at his sides. He was prepared.

"First of all," ventured Keeler meekly, "I want to know the name of the gentleman who was in Mr. Milwood's study at the time that you let me in—the first gentleman, Ichi. Now, his name, please."

"Which first gen'leman?"

"The one you let into the study some time *before* you let me into the house, Ichi. You're not thinking as briskly as you can. Remember, it is wise to do as I ask, if——"

"Not let him into study!" interrupted the Jap hurriedly. "Mr. Milwood let him in. When I hear them talking, inside the room, when they say about stocks, I——" He came to a horrified, gasping halt.

The incriminating evidence of eavesdropper had gushed from his lips when he was seeking vindication.

Keeler flecked a bit of dust from his own lapel and looked out of the window.

"As you say, Mr. Milwood let him in," he suggested blandly. "But maybe you let him out, Ichi. Did you let him out—out of the house—after the talk?"

"Yes. Let him out front door."

"Ah! Exactly. Now that's the way it should be. You let him out. So you saw him. You know who he is. You know his name. And you're going to tell it to me. What is his name, Ichi?"

"Vandiver. People call 'Colonel Vandiver.' Mr. Milwood call 'Vandiver.'"

"Colonel Vandiver. Ah, yes. Young? Old? Old, I guess, eh?"

"Old."

"Just so. Now, I wonder, if you thought very hard, whether you could remember just where this Colonel Vandiver lives, Ichi?"

"Emperor Hotel, New York."

"Really?"

Keeler scribbled the name on the back of the "suspected list."

"Now, before we leave Colonel Vandiver's name, Ichi, I'd like to know—I'd like to know, very much, whether Mr. Milwood has seen much of the colonel lately; whether they've been in communication."

Ichi showed signs of becoming more voluble.

"Colonel Vandiver call Mr. Milwood many times during week. He call on telephone. Mr. Milwood say, angry, 'Ichi, tell blamed old fool I not here, at home.' And I tell. And blamed old fool say: 'Tell him, Milwood, call up Vandiver, Emperor Hotel.' And I tell. But he don't."

Keeler rubbed his hands in glee.

"Well, that's fine. That's the way to testify. Right out with it. See? You're a very smart man, Ichi!"

The Jap's sturdy chest became a trifle more prominent. He stood eager for another onslaught of interrogation.

"Now that we know all we want to know about this gentleman, thanks to you," commended Keeler, with flattering emphasis, "we'll turn to a lady visitor. Among the guests at dinner that night was there a Miss Madge Carr?"

"Miss Carr? Very beautiful lady, with silk dress?"

Keeler coughed discreetly.

"I—er—the fact is, I have never seen the lady. We will presume she's beautiful—very beautiful—because Mil-

wood knew only beautiful women. Beauty was one of his weaknesses. And the silk dress—yes, she would have on a silk dress, certainly."

"Beautiful lady, in silk dress, gold color, very expensive," volunteered Ichi, warming to his description.

"Yes—lady in gold-colored, expensive silk dress," urged Keeler. "What then?"

"She was guest for first time. Never see her in house before. Don't eat soup."

"Doesn't eat soup?" parroted Keeler in blank amazement. "Why——"

"Don't know why. I serve beautiful mushroom soup. Beautiful lady not touch. Everybody eat. Beautiful lady she disdain."

"Oh, yes, I see. She hurt your feelings because she didn't eat your soup. And she was Miss Carr?"

"Don't know name." Ichi lapsed into bare facts.

"Didn't you hear any one call her anything? 'Madge,' or 'Miss Carr,' or perhaps——"

"Don't know front or back name!" declared the Jap decisively.

"And you don't know where she lives?"

"No. Don't know."

"Do you know if she *is* Miss Carr?"

"No. Maybe. I don't know."

"I see. Well, you've done very nicely. Thank you."

Keeler summoned the attendant. The interview was ended.

On the way out he met the chief in the corridor.

"Find out all you wanted to know?" inquired Pyne with the inflection of deep respect that had lately tinged his conversations with the little man.

"Not all. Not quite all."

"Well, do you think you found out as much as he knew?"

"I think so."

"H'm! Maybe if you call me up in a couple of hours I'll be able to add a couple of explanatory notes. Maybe not. Anyhow, it wouldn't do any hurt to call me up."

Keeler looked dazed.

"You're going to third degree him?"

"That's it, Mr. Keeler. I don't trust those little frogs. They're too blamed eager for education and the inside workings of things to be wholesome. Why, gosh, if I didn't know one once who took care of a bachelor's place, down here on Columbia Heights. The daughter of the superintendent of the building was found with her skull crushed in, down one of the air shafts; and he was star suspect, because one day a hallboy heard the girl call him a yellow rat when he spoke to her.

"I examined his belongings, to get a line on his habits, and in his stack of books, would you believe it, there wasn't one that was written in plain English, that a gentleman could understand. Lots of 'em were Latin—and the others put out by these fellows, Sudermann, Ibsen, Hauptmann—those were some of the names, I remember. Not that I guess they mean any more to you than they did to me. Well, as I was saying, no reg'lar man could make it out. So we got a chap who had graduated from Yale and was working with us then, to read 'em. We called him our 'millionaire detective,' because he was papa's boy. And he reported that the stuff was very morbid and likely to drive any one to drink—or murder. So we held the Jap."

"And was he convicted on the evidence?" gasped Keeler.

"Oh, no. But he came mighty near being. Would 'a' served him right too—reading that junk when he should 'a' been waxing floors and making beds. No. Later on, her father confessed that he'd pushed her off the roof because he couldn't get her to stay in nights. But ever since then I've been suspicious of the breed."

"Well, I don't think you're going to get anything more out of Ichi," declared Keeler. "When are you going to put him through?"

"Now. See that door?"

Keeler looked down the corridor. At the end was a metal door, painted black.

"Come with me," said Pyne cordially. "I'll show you something."

Their footsteps rang hollowly on the stone floor. Pyne knocked on the door, in cipher code, then motioned to Keeler to open it.

The interior of the room, black as the depths of night, was pierced by two powerful, dazzling rays of electric light. One fell on a cocked revolver lying on a table; the other on a huddled, twisted object, covered by a sheet. It was the same size, the same shape, and in the same position as Milwood's body, when it was found murdered.

Guiltless as he was and familiar with third-degree tactics, Keeler experienced a sudden sense of suffocation. It was such a simple and forceful argument: two lights—the weapon, and the victim! And all the rest—blackness.

Pyne stepped into the corridor again and pulled the door shut behind them.

"You noticed that the body—that's Tim Rafferty, our hotel man—was lying against a door, on the farther side of the room. The Jap'll be brought in that door. We'll make him open it. He'll have to shove the body aside to get in. Then we'll push him from behind. That'll make him stumble over it. Then we'll slam the door and leave him in there alone for two seconds. See?"

Keeler edged toward the nearest exit. He was suddenly conscious of the dryness of the roof of his mouth and the sandpaper surface of his tongue.

"I'll call you later," he promised shyly. "I guess I'll go now."

As he went down the steps he heard Pyne's voice, sharp and decisive:

"Bring the Jap!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE TRAIL OF VANDIVER.

Coming out of the Poplar Street station, Keeler's eye fell on a fascinating sight. Across the street a wide plate-glass window bore in white enamel lettering the name "JOHNSON'S." Inside the window, a man in white, with chef's cap and spotless cotton gloves, was pouring a viscous material from a silver pitcher.

The material fell in round spots, on a black surface, under which burned rows of tiny blue gas flames. In a very short time these same round disks turned a delightful brown—and fluffy—and were transferred to a plate, together with a tiny pitcher filled with maple sirup.

Keeler stood on the curb opposite this den of enchantment, and watched. There were three other people watching. But they watched just from curiosity. Keeler was watching because within him was born a desire that was searing his brain.

He had not eaten buckwheat cakes since the last Thanksgiving morning that he had gone home for a visit. He had not wanted buckwheat cakes, because they had never been shoved under his nose like this, and because they were not listed in the dietary of "Delectable Dinners for Dejected Diners."

But now he wanted buckwheat cakes more fiercely than he ever had wanted anything. And, what was more, he knew that, even though he was hesitating, outside, while his will power fought with his digestive apparatus, he could pick the winner of the contest right off.

But it was not until he had given the order to a dryad in white linen collar and apron, and heard it echoed from the front—"Plate of wheats! Four!"—that he was sure he wasn't going to get cold feet and order dry toast and tea with lemon, instead.

This was the second time in one day that he had succumbed to hysteria—the bus ride, and now this short cut to dyspepsia. He ate slowly, "fletcherizing" with stop-watch calculation. The aroma of a cup of coffee beside the plate of his neighbor sent his brain reeling. But no—not that! He still had a shred of his former Spartan will left to him.

A man entered, slapped his hat on a peg, thudded heavily into a chair opposite, and shook out an evening edition of a newspaper with businesslike briskness. Keeler caught the headline:

"MILWOOD MYSTERY DEEPENS!"

And here he was devouring buckwheat cakes, while others, cleverer than he, were ferreting out this thing! It would serve him right if they got in ahead of him and cleared up the whole case till a simple child could gaze into its limpid depths.

But he didn't think they would. They were on the wrong track. They were all on the wrong track! Fortified by the warm, nourishing food, his confidence in himself returned. He called for his check.

The dryad looked with scorn upon the empty plate and punched a contemptuous ten cents on the bit of white pasteboard. Keeler hid a nickel under the plate edge, rose, took his hat, and said "Good afternoon!" because he thought she looked hurt. At the cashier's desk he refused the customary toothpick and hurried into the street.

"Hotel Emperor," he murmured to himself. "Let me see. That's on Columbus Avenue in the eighties. Subway to Seventy-ninth. Ought to make it in three-quarters of an hour."

Forty-seven minutes later Keeler walked into the main lobby of the Emperor. A weary-looking clerk, immersed in the intricacies of the New Orleans racing charts, raised one eyebrow in bold interrogation.

"Is Mr.—er—Colonel Vandiver stopping here?" inquired the little man timidly.

"Yep."

"I'd like to send up my card."

"Give operator the name. She'll phone up." Once more he sank into the complexities of Brown Betty, odds seven to one, for place, coming in a neck ahead of Ali Baba, the favorite.

Keeler approached the operator's desk.

"Will you be kind enough to send my name up to Colonel Vandiver's apartment?"

He leaned toward the switchboard and smiled gently at the blond damsel with the rhinestone sunburst and the Brazilian pearls.

"Vandiver?"

"Just so," said Keeler.

"Got a card?" she catechized peremptorily. "He can't hear over the wire. He's deaf as a—as a—— Oh, excuse me, are you a friend of his?"

Keeler hastened to put her at ease.

"No, I'm not a friend of his. In fact, he doesn't know me at all. I want to see him on business. So he's deaf?"

"Fierce deaf over the wire! He c'n hear pretty good when you're talkin' to him in his ear—an' what he don't hear he makes up."

"Just wait a minute," said the little detective. "I'll be back."

He went across to the news stand, purchased a forty-cent box of mixed chocolates, and, returning, placed them on the operator's desk.

"Gee!" she looked at him with startled admiration. "I didn't think you were that kind of a guy at all!"

"I'm not!" spluttered Keeler helplessly.

"Oh, cutey!" she encouraged. "Let little Connie tell you your methods are regal!"

"How long has Colonel Vandiver lived here?" stammered Keeler, getting scarlet between where the barber cut

his hair too short and the top of his collar.

"Bashful boy, eh?" urged Constance softly. "Talks about old, deaf fogy. Gee! Honest, when I seen you come in here I had you down for an agent for illustrated hymn books. But now that I got a good squint at you, I see the 'pep' behind your eyes. Believe me, kid, you're all to the chili sauce!"

"Listen, miss," said Keeler, gulping hard. "You've mistaken my purpose, I fear. I wanted to bother you and take up your time for a few minutes, asking you a few questions; so I thought the least I could do was to buy you a little box of sweets. I didn't think you'd care to talk to me unless you got something for your trouble. No one, much, does."

"An' you didn't fall victim to my dazzling smile and 'perfect thirty-six'? You didn't feel a flutter in your affections when you looked into my eyes? You're a queer fish!"

"Yes, I know," agreed Keeler simply.

"Want to know how long the old colonel's been here?" she repeated curiously. "What'd you want to know for? Say! You can't be a trailer, are you? A bull—a central-office gink y' know? Oh, of course you ain't! They don't come your pattern! Well, I'll tell you. The colonel's been comin' here for six years, off 'n' on—but this is the longest stop he's made. He's been here 'most seven weeks, I guess. He's a Civil War guy, y' know. Anything else you'd like to know?"

"No, nothing, thank you. If you'll just send up my card."

Keeler breathed more freely at the thought of a possible quick release. He would rather have been Ichi in the somber third-degree chamber, over at detective headquarters, than the victim of this girl's Broadway banter. He scribbled hastily, under his name:

In regard to the new War Pension Bill. I wish your opinions.

A few minutes later the boy directed him to room No. 410, on the fourth floor.

A man, of perhaps seventy-three or four, but looking five years younger, stood at the door. His frock coat, whose silk buttons bore the glaze of faithful service, crinkled in deep folds about his thin frame. His white beard and mustache hid the expression of his mouth.

In his eyes was the perpetual mild questioning that is found in the eyes of the habitually deaf. He extended a thin, vein-knotted hand in cordial greeting.

"Ah, Mr.—er——," consulting the card which he still held in his left hand, "Mr. Keeler, I am delighted to make your acquaintance. Won't you be seated?"

As Keeler's hand closed around his host's, he experienced a peculiar shock. His impulse was to look down at the hand that lay in his. Not wishing to appear rude, he restained that impulse.

When he was seated and had refused both a nip of fine old Bourbon and a choice Havana cigar, he let his eyes wander to that right hand.

What he saw caused him to start almost imperceptibly; but, slight as it was, Colonel Vandiver caught the movement. He smiled sadly.

"I lost those two first fingers on my right hand," he said slowly, "at the battle of Malvern Hill. You see, they're shaved down pretty close to the knuckle. It was a short, hot argument between a young Confederate officer and myself. When the war was over and I came back to my home town, I was twenty-three years old. I died a thousand deaths over those shorn fingers, Mr. Keeler. Somehow, you're a hero when you lose a leg or arm in battle, but when you lose a couple of fingers you're only an object of pity—and of morbid curiosity."

"I can readily see how true that is," agreed Keeler gently.

The old gentleman laughed.

"Oh, of course, I've gotten used to it now. In fact, I never think of my poor, distorted hand until a stranger, like yourself, draws my attention to it. But in the young days, when the eyes of a pretty girl would rest upon it, and I saw the ill-concealed horror she felt, my heart was cut to ribbons. I never married," he added simply.

"Colonel Vandiver!" Keeler looked squarely into the dimmed, steel-blue eyes before him. "I came up here, sailing under false colors!"

"Your name is not Keeler?"

"Yes, my name is Keeler. But I have nothing to do with the new War Pension Bill. I don't even know if one has been proposed."

"Nor I, Mr. Keeler. I had hoped there had been."

The detective drew a folded newspaper from his coat pocket and handed it to the colonel. The grimly scarred fingers closed on it.

"Have you seen the evening paper, colonel?" he asked quietly, keeping a keen eye on the seamed face.

"Yes, sir. Why, yes. I have a copy here."

He went to a small stable and took a mussed-looking newspaper from the under shelf. He held it up in his right hand.

"Oh, you were reading it, when I was announced," remarked Keeler indifferently.

"Yes. I believe I was sitting next to the window reading, when the boy knocked at the door."

"I see. How long had you known the dead man?"

The long, wasted thumb wrapped itself convulsively around the two remaining fingers. The old man breathed with a dry rasp in his throat.

"Dead man? What dead man?"

"The one at Bay Ridge."

"I really hadn't seen the account. I——"

"Colonel Vandiver." Keeler spoke softly.

The old man cupped his palm into a sounding board and leaned forward so that his right ear was toward the detective. Keeler raised his voice.

"A man couldn't ignore a headline in three-inch type," he said. "Also, a man who is summoned to the door while he is reading a newspaper will either carry that paper to the door with him, or else throw it carelessly on the nearest article of furniture. Only a painstaking housewife, who prides herself on being able to 'eat off the floors' in her home, will think of folding it and putting it on an under shelf before admitting a visitor. You were reading that first-page story, colonel, and you didn't want any one to catch you reading it. Why?"

Keeler had not risen from his chair. He sat, carelessly swinging one leg over the other; looking with mild, inquiring eyes at the gasping old man before him.

"Sir!" breathed the colonel.

"Oh, dear! I knew you'd say that!" complained Keeler plaintively. "It isn't that kind of a case at all. I'm not trying to offend you—I beg you to believe that. Now that I've seen you, you make me think of my own grandfather—and he was a hero to me. Sit down, sir, won't you, please? I want to tell you something."

"You come to my apartment, sir, and accuse me of attempting to deceive, or falsifying, of——"

"Of course I do!" grumbled Keeler. "Because you were doing it—them—both. You attempted to deceive me and you falsified; but I don't bear any ill feeling, anyway. Now, let's get together on this, colonel. You sit over there on the other side of the table, and I'll sit here."

After a moment's consideration Colonel Vandiver dropped into the designated chair. His watery, light

eyes bulged from their sockets until the entire iris was visible. His shrunken hands clutched each other till the feeble throb in his gray-blue veins was plainly perceptible.

"Did you ever see a silver bullet, colonel?" asked Keeler suddenly.

"No, sir, I never did, sir."

"No," mused the detective. "They're not common. I didn't think you'd ever seen one. I never had until—until——"

His voice trailed off into an indistinct syllable. He rose from his chair, walked to the mantelpiece, and examined a curious bit of bric-a-brac. It was a small, crystal vase, with a beautifully sculptured bronze dragon coiled around its transparency.

"Odd bit," he observed, picking it up in his fingers.

"Yes, my young nephew, who is an officer in the United States navy, sir, brought it to me from Japan. I have a peculiar feeling about that little vase. I feel that if I lost it my health would fail. I entertain no superstitions or fetishes of any sort, yet I have that strange presentment about a bit of crystal."

"Oh!" shrieked Keeler as the vase dropped from his grasp.

With a lightning movement the old man jumped to the spot. His maimed right hand shot out spasmodically to save his mascot from destruction. But with a skillful dive Keeler rescued it before it struck the floor.

While the colonel was still panting from the exercise, the little man began to speak rapidly, distinctly. For fear a word would be lost he bent over until his lips all but brushed Vandiver's ear.

"Colonel," he stated calmly, "you were in Mr. Milwood's study a few hours before the body was found. You threatened to kill him, unless he did something that you wished him to do. You repeated your threat. You said: 'I'll kill you!' three times. What did you want to kill him for, colonel?"

"I didn't kill him! I didn't! I swear to God I didn't kill him! You must believe me!"

The old man had slid to his knees. He clung to Keeler with hysterical tenacity.

"I know you didn't," declared Keeler calmly. "What I want to know is, why you had the desire to kill him. What was your grudge?"

Vandiver muttered vaguely to himself.

"I'm not trying to accuse you of anything, man," explained the little detective. "I am doing my best to eliminate you. There are too many characters in my play. I have to get rid of a few. And you're next in line. I tell you what I'll do. A fair exchange, et cetera, you know. You tell me why you wanted to kill Milwood, and I'll tell you how I know you didn't kill him. Now, is that a bargain?"

"I'll tell you the whole thing!" moaned Vandiver, half beside himself with worry and senile terror.

Keeler lifted him to his feet and placed him gently in a chair. Then he sat down himself.

"I went to his home last night, bound to get some satisfaction," confessed Vandiver, holding out his hands in earnest supplication. "He'd robbed me! He'd ruined the few years I have to live! But I didn't kill him! I didn't!"

"There, there!" soothed Keeler, reaching over to pat his arm reassuringly. "It's all right, colonel. I'll stand by you. Go on with your story. There's nothing to fear."

The old man's head sank forward on his outstretched arms. His spare body shook with a violent spasm of dry coughing. Keeler ran to the small wash closet, filled a glass with water and held it to the colonel's lips. After a sip or two the coughing ceased and the exhausted man wiped his streaming eyes.

"I had a little money," he continued,

with a great effort. "The interest from it was an income sufficient for my needs. I have always had a passion for games of chance, sir. Not heavy gambling, because I never had sufficient funds. I did not stop to realize that, at my age, any chances I took might prove fatal. And so, when this man came along, I——"

"What man?" interrupted Keeler sharply.

"Milwood. He had a lot of dead stocks he wanted to unload. Some one told him of my little money and he sought me out. He told me to go to a broker and buy all the X. R. & T. stock I could get. He said, inside of ten days, it would go up twenty points and I'd clear a fat sum. I did as he said. I bought at thirty-two and a half. In ten days it was down to four and an eighth.

"I went to him, almost demented by the terrible tragedy that had overtaken me. I was an old man, alone in the world, my eyesight failing, my hearing seriously impaired—and my money gone! He promised to do what he could. Needless to say, he didn't keep his promise.

"I got people to telephone for me. They were told he was not at home. Yesterday I went to Bay Ridge with murder in my heart. I took up my stand outside his beautiful home. He had invited me to dinner, to 'talk things over.' I refused. But I went to his house. I waited until I thought they had finished dinner, then I walked up the steps and rang the bell.

"The door was ajar; the guests were just coming from the dining room into a sort of reception hall. Milwood's Japanese servant was passing around cigars and cigarettes. Milwood came to the door himself. I stepped into the hall before he had a chance to close the door. He motioned me upstairs and followed immediately.

"He led me into a peculiar room, all filled with guns and books and strange chemicals—then left me there alone. A half hour later he returned. Because he laughed at my pleadings, because he scorned the idea that I could find redress in the face of his financial power, I threatened to kill him. And I *would* have killed him——"

The old man rose, trembling; his clenched hands raised above his head, his dim eyes blazing vindictively, his voice shrill and rasping.

"I would have killed him, only——"

"Only what?"

"Only at that moment the Japanese servant knocked at the door and announced another visitor."

"Who? A Miss Madge Carr?"

The colonel shook his head uncertainly.

"I am very deaf," he said. "I did not catch the name. But it was a lady. I saw the edge of her skirt in a doorway off the hall, as I went downstairs."

"And she was his next visitor? You are sure?"

"I—I think so. At least—well, I passed a man on the stairs. It may have been—but I thought——"

"And the first you heard of the finding of the dead man was what you read in the papers this morning?"

"Yes, yes! I swear to that!"

"You needn't swear it to me," said Keeler kindly. "You couldn't have murdered him. I'll tell you why. You've lost the fore and middle fingers of your right hand. Nevertheless, you have not become left-handed. I proved that to my own satisfaction when I saw you shake hands with your right hand. You took the newspaper I handed you with your right hand; you held up the edition you had been reading with your right hand, and, last of all, when you were taken off your guard, you endeavored to save your crystal vase with your right hand.

"According to all the laws of nature, a man acting on a murderous impulse

would use the hand he was accustomed to using every day—the hand in which he had confidence and power. A man lacking the first two fingers of his right hand could not fire a revolver with that hand—and the dead man was killed by a bullet! That's how I know you are not the assassin, Colonel Vandiver. Let me congratulate you on the fact that Ichi, the Japanese servant, knocked at the door exactly when he did."

"Who killed him, Mr. Keeler?" asked the old man, firm in the belief that the genius before him could read the stars if need be.

"I'll call you up when I find out," replied Keeler absent-mindedly, as he drew his pencil through Item No. 1 on the "suspected list." "Good afternoon, colonel."

Down on the main floor he crossed the lobby in a brown study. The blond goddess at the switchboard bit into her ninth chocolate cream and watched him disappear, his lips moving noiselessly, his brows knit.

"Nut!" was her terse estimate.

The doorman caught his murmurings as he passed.

"Woman—Hilda van Vleck—love scene—she threatened—struck him! H'm! Hilda van Vleck!"

The doorman gazed open-mouthed at the retreating figure.

"Bughouse!" he summarized.

CHAPTER XV.

TRAVELING IN CIRCLES.

Keeler stood on the corner of Columbus Avenue and Eightieth Street. Another man, as puzzled, as excited, and as hindered as he, would have paced up and down with his hands behind his back, or jingled his loose change and his key ring. Keeler did neither.

His gaze was focused on a window across the street. It was the second shop window he had taken a keen interest in that day—but this one was devoid of buckwheat cakes.

It displayed, instead, a full assortment of soaps and wash rags. The center feature was a huge, presumably hollow, cake of purple bath soap, that was intermittently illuminated and darkened. In the full light the name, "Super-Violette," was thrown into relief.

But Keeler was not looking at the display. Visible above the array of soaps was the cover of a cherry-colored telephone booth. He was making up his mind to go into that booth and call up Hilda van Vleck.

He had never met the woman; had never seen her. If she was the "very beautiful lady with expensive, gold-colored silk dress," of Ichi's narrative, he knew he would never have the courage to face her with sundry charges.

Anyway, wasn't it extremely rude to force oneself on a lady one didn't know? The possible etiquette of the detective business had never troubled him as much as right now.

No. He guessed the only thing to do was to call up, and approach the subject gingerly, on the basis of mutual friendship. He felt around in his pocket for a nickel. The most worldly Lotharian touch in Keeler's make-up was that he didn't carry a little pocketbook for his change.

He was the type of man for whom those queer little pin-seal and alligator-skin purses were manufactured. People watching him get on a car felt sure he was going to extract one, slide his silver into the flap of it, and pay his fare. They experienced the keenest disappointment when they found that he carried his money just like other men.

Keeler walked across the street, still searching for the elusive nickel, praying fervently in his heart of hearts that he would not find it. He was sparring for time, he thought. In reality he was sparring for that particular kind

of nerve that one must have to face beauty in distress without succumbing.

Knowing full well that it was a necessity to mankind, Keeler had always looked upon the telephone as the curse of modern existence. He had been insulted more times, over the wire, than anywhere else. He had come nearer to inflicting insult, himself. He had sweated like a stoker in those booths in summer. He had been repelled by the stale odors of tobacco, concentrated lily of the valley and disinfectants, all pleasantly jumbled.

But here was an instance where the telephone was going to act as a shield, a buffer, a potent palladium. He could talk without being seen, without seeing. There would be no twin-pansy pools fringed with curling lashes. No twitching, moist red lips. In short, nothing to take his mind off the points of the case.

His fingers closed around a nickel. He could have sworn to its denomination by the queer little cold thrill that struck his heart. He entered the booth —his second telephone call of the day, but his life's first voluntary phone talk with a woman.

"River 10001, please," his voice faltered.

"What number, please?" insisted central.

"1-0-0-0-1 Riverside," elaborated Keeler.

"River 1—— I beg your pardon!"

He heard the Columbus Exchange give it to the Riverside branch. He waited. An icy-cold moisture sprouted along the line of his spinal column. A Croton bug, wanderer and explorer, crawled slowly up the polished surface of the wood. Ordinarily, Keeler would have felt a keen disgust. To-day, he watched its progress, hypnotized.

There was a p-r-r-r, a deafening click that temporarily suspended his hearing.

"Busy!" reported central.

His nickel clinked into the little metal trough below. He pocketed it with a sense of exaltation that drove him to the soda fountain.

There, pasted in cubist geometrical designs on the mirror, he read of delicious drinks, such as "Frosted Delight," "Sugared Lime Whip," and "Raspberry Razzle." He felt foolish enough to sample them all. But a customer in distress stopped to order a draft of aromatic spirits of ammonia. That brought Keeler back to earth.

"I'll have some plain soda, with a dash of phosphate in it," he told the fancy mixer, who looked with disdain upon any order with less than six ingredients.

The unpleasant sting of his familiar drink cleared his brain. What a fool he was! Why was he so overjoyed when that number was reported busy? It was only postponing the agony, wasn't it? Of course it was. Well, then, what was there to be happy about? Nothing.

If the next booth telephone had been five miles distant he would have walked it rather than phone twice from the same place, right under the eyes of the clerks. He felt humiliated for no reason at all.

He walked three blocks south before he found another drug store, with the dark-blue-and-white bell suspended over the entrance. This time he strode in boldly. The same nickel was pasted to his hot, moist palm. He asked for the number. He waited.

"I'm ringing Riverside 10001—trying to get River 10001," came to him at automatic intervals of four seconds each.

Then a voice—a different voice—and a woman's, answered.

"Hello," it called softly. "Hello."

"Hello," answered Keeler, gulping hard. "Is this Mrs. van Vleck?"

"Monsieur wish to speak to madame? Ze name, please?"

"Oh—oh, er—this is Mrs. van

Vleck's maid, I take it? Well, there's no use giving her my name, because she doesn't know it, you see. If you don't mind, ask her to come to the phone. Tell her it's a business matter. Tell her——"

"Just a moment, monsieur." The maid interrupted his explanations coldly. "I will inform madame."

She left the phone. Keeler began to feel brave, invincible. He even went so far as to whistle a few bars of "Die Wacht Am Rhein," which he always confused with the march from "Tannhäuser."

Suddenly, over the wire, he heard the little decisive click of high heels on a polished floor. A fumbling with the receiver came to him, and then the maid:

"Madame is reclining on her couch with a—oh, so miserable sick headache. Monsieur will have to excuse her. She is so sorry."

A noise that meant the slapping up of the receiver woke him from his reverie. Keeler stared in dismay at the unresponsive instrument. The conversation was ended. Once more he left a drug store. This time with all the latent Irish from the third generation back boiling in his veins.

What kind of a boob was he, anyway? he asked himself. Why hadn't he insisted on speaking to Mrs. van Vleck? Why hadn't he thrown a good scare into that maid? Why hadn't he——

An inoffensive carrot that had fallen from a vegetable stand in front of a grocery store lay in his path. He gave it a vicious kick that was intended to drive it into infinity. Instead, it rolled a short distance, pivoted on its long, thin point, and returned to him with the unerring accuracy of a trick hoop roller in vaudeville.

"That's what I've been doing all day!" muttered Keeler to himself, in frank disgust. "Traveling in circles! I've got to do something decisive. And first of all, I've got to speak to Mrs. van Vleck."

He consulted his watch, and was startled to find that it was a full hour later than he thought. At Sixty-seventh Street he turned through to cross Broadway. He had decided to try another phone call, this time from a switchboard. He wanted a woman's voice to greet the French maid. He wanted a woman's voice to insist upon speaking to Mrs. van Vleck.

With vivid memories of the gem-decked blonde at the Hotel Emperor still haunting him he shuddered at the thought of approaching another of the deadly species.

Midway between Columbus Avenue and Broadway, on Sixty-seventh Street, some one walked up to him and dug him playfully in the ribs.

"Say, didn't I wave day-day to you yesterday and wish you immunity from vacation madness? Ah, little did I suspect that one of your open countenance—I might say your guileless *gesicht*—was leading a double life! Where does she live—and what'll you blow me to if I don't squeal to the boys?"

Turner, the irrepressible, one of the younger men in the district attorney's office, hauled off and landed a resounding whack on Keeler's gray tweed shoulder. Without waiting for a response he rattled on:

"Honest! Listen! What's the main idea? Why are you prowling over asphalt lanes and through brick forests, when a babbling brook, a shady nook, and all the trimmings are singing their siren songs up in the mountains? I get mine a week from Saturday and I leave on the four-twelve that afternoon for Pompton, New Jersey. A friend of mine's got a dream of a place on the lake up there. Fishes for perch out of his living-room window and grows peacocks as a diversion."

"I'm—um—I'm delayed," stammered Keeler. Turner always got on his

nerves. At this moment he frayed them to raw fringes. "I intended going this morning, but I was unavoidably detained in town."

"Well, say, take a tip from me, and don't get detained much longer. What's the use of going away for a couple of days? You eat up a bunch of car fare and all you do is try to make out the time-table, so you'll get the right train coming back. Nothing to it!"

He pulled Keeler over to the iron railing that ran around the armory on that block. From the way he pushed his hat back from his forehead and folded his arms Keeler knew he was going to hold him up for at least ten minutes—and every minute had an hour's value to him just then.

"I imagine I'll have to be going on," began the little man timidly. "You see there are so many little things I have to settle up before I leave to-morrow—and I have to get some collars."

It was the wrong thing to say.

"Now, there's where you're all off!" declared Turner forcefully. "When you go away for a rest—anyway, a guy who works as hard as you do—you want to take nothing but flannel shirts with collars attached. Back to nature! That's the stuff."

"I dare say you're right," murmured poor Keeler, ready to agree to anything. "Well, I guess I'll be going. It's getting late. Good-by, Mr. Turner. I'll remember about the collars."

"Good-by, old top!" brisked the other, crushing the unresisting fingers in an iron grasp. "But, gee! Say—almost forgot it—what d' you think of the big Bay Ridge mystery? Isn't it just your luck, though, to be leaving town just when they're beginning to unravel a great, big, juicy one like that? I'll bet if the old man knew you were still in the city he'd send for you. Say, I'm interested in your idea of it. Just for fun—what do you make of it?"

"You mean the murder?" Keeler hesitated over the word.

"Sure, the murder! Great guns! What else is every one talking about? You don't mean to tell me you haven't gone over the thing? Why, it's just your style, Keeler. It couldn't have been more like you if it had been cut to your measure. Well, say, as long as you haven't gone into it, I'll tell you, confidentially, that the whole blamed thing is as plain as the nose on your face. Gosh! If they'd send me over there I'd clean up that muddle so quick that you wouldn't know it had——"

"Go down and tell the old man to put you on it," suggested Keeler, without malice. "It's good training for any one—and the chief likes to see his men ambitious. Good-by."

This time he made a clean get-away, leaving Turner standing speechless in the center of the sidewalk, undetermined whether to be offended or inflated.

Keeler walked into the lobby of a quiet family hotel on Broadway. The switchboard operator, a small, frail girl, with eyes too large and too dark-rimmed for her tiny, flower face, smiled sweetly as Keeler bent over her desk.

"I want you to do me a favor," he began, hardly knowing how to approach the subject. "I want you to call a number for me. A maid will answer. I want you to ask for her mistress. Insist on speaking to her. Now, don't be afraid. You're not going to get into any trouble by doing this, at all. It's a er—a trick I'm playing on one of my friends. You don't mind, do you?"

The girl threw back her sleek, dainty head and laughed heartily.

"Why, no, of course not. I do that every day in the week. Sometimes two or three times day. And for every reason under the sun. What's the number you want to call, please? And the name of the party?"

Keeler could have embraced her on

the spot. He felt she was not going to foozle things. He gave her the number slowly. She passed it on to the central with the distinctness and speed of an automatic machine. He added the name in full.

"Hello!" she said at length. "Hello, Marie! Is Hilda—er—is Mrs. van Vleck in? Yes, I would like to speak to her. Something about that rose-colored frock she saw. Yes, I'll hold the wire. Certainly."

She clapped her hand over the transmitter and turned to Keeler.

"How did you know the maid's name was Marie?" he inquired. Loving that particular form of wit, and despairing of mastering it, he was quick to recognize and admire the slightest trace of it in others.

"Most French maids sift down to 'Marie,' in time, no matter how high and mighty their original names may have been. If she had indignantly denied the 'Marie' I'd have apologized for having forgotten her name so soon. The Hilda, followed by a slight hesitation and the correction, proved affection, I think."

In Keeler's heart was a profound respect for all women. But this dark, wistful slip of a girl was the first of her sex to inspire him with confidence in her coolness and ability. He began to look around for a florist's stand. Candy wouldn't fit here, somehow.

She was speaking again.

"Hello! Is this you, Mrs. van Vleck? Just a minute, please!"

She motioned to the string of booths, jabbed a plug in firmly. No. 3 lighted up. Keeler took down the receiver.

"Hello!" he said. "Mrs. van Vleck, you don't know me. I'll tell you why I called you up. You see, it's about this Milwood affair over at Bay Ridge. I'm a friend of his and I know you are, so I thought I'd like to talk to you about it. Could you see me, now, if I came right up?"

There was no answer. Keeler listened intently. He knew he was still connected. To his trained ear came the sound of little, gasping breaths.

"Mrs. van Vleck," he called gently, "don't be alarmed. I assure you I come as a friend. I——"

"Who are you?" was wafted to him faintly over the wire. Then again:

"I want to know who you are!" This with plaintive inflection.

"Oh, you wouldn't know me, anyway," Keeler's nervousness lent an assurance and air of bonhomie to his voice that he was far from feeling. "You didn't see me and I didn't see you. But I know you were in Mr. Milwood's study last night and I heard what you said when you were there."

A low wail, ending in a gasp, struck his ear. There was a thud, followed by a knocking sound, that was caused, probably, by a receiver swinging loosely on a cord.

"Mrs. van Vleck!" he shouted into the transmitter. "Mrs. van Vleck!"

No answer. He heard a clock, evidently in her apartments, strike the half hour. Then the same high heels clicked into hearing.

"Madame! Madame! Qu'avez-vous? Mon Dieu! Qu'avez-vous? Madame!"

The exclamations, gaining in intensity, ended in a terrified shriek. Then the receiver was snapped into place.

Keeler dashed out of the hotel. He had a vivid picture of the probable scene in Mrs. van Vleck's apartment, at that moment. She had fainted. Fainted—or something worse. The terror in the maid's voice suggested almost anything. A lady's maid must be used to fainting spells. In Keeler's hazy knowledge of the accomplishments of women, fainting occupied a prominent position. He had heard frequent lapses in that direction was the prerogative of the gently bred, the neurotic, and the super-

temperamental woman. Therefore, either the maid had been in the employ of the more stolid, bourgeois type—or else Mrs. van Vleck was in a serious state.

There was not a taxi in sight. Usually, at this point, where Broadway and Columbus Avenue cross, there is a continuous procession of them, each with its soliciting chauffeur. If Keeler took the surface car he would have to walk three long blocks. The subway would be even less convenient.

Coming through the side street, fresh from the livery stable, appeared the type of vehicle that infests the entrances of Central Park; in which one can tour the length and breadth of the park with authentic information concerning the mall, the casino, the reservoir, McGowan's Pass Tavern, et cetera, thrown in for one dollar! This carriage, a miniature, loose-jointed imitation of a victoria, is a shred of the New York of thirty years ago—unchanged.

The horse looked less dejected than he should have been, to be absolutely in the picture. The driver was sober, and the upholstery was fairly intact. Keeler stepped to the curb and raised his right hand.

His foot was on the step, his hand gripping the slippery cloth, when a man, familiar in outline, darted from the shade of a side entrance and ran across Broadway. Keeler blinked just once—and looked again.

It was the man he had found lurking in the bushes outside Milwood's home the night before. It had been dark then. But the exaggerated squareness of the mold in which he was cast, and the massive joining of his neck and shoulders, left no doubt in Keeler's mind.

The man was not a yegg. In the daylight his clothes appeared to be of good quality—and neat. His face, though of the florid, bulldog type, bore traces of refinement. A surface car came along. It stopped. The man got aboard; the doors snapped closed behind him. The car went on.

Keeler thought with lightning speed, then.

"Follow that car!" he commanded the coachman. "The red one. Keep about a half a block behind it."

Then he shrank into a corner of the vividly odorous carriage seat, covered with confusion at having spoken so peremptorily. He would have to make it up to the driver in the tip.

His mind swerved back to the man in the car. What was he? Who was he? Where had he been between the time of the chase, on the previous night—and now? Had he just now been trailing Keeler himself?

Keeler crimsoned at the possibilities that came crowding into his brain. Could he have been shadowed without knowing it? He began to wish with all his heart that he had gone on his vacation. His lips tightened involuntarily; his limp fingers stiffened into a half-threatening fist.

"I'm going to get him," monologued Keeler, "if I never do anything else worth while! That is, I'd be very pleased if I *did* get him," he added characteristically.

The driver was following directions beautifully. Whenever the car stopped to take in or let off passengers, he would slow his speed to a bare walk—always keeping the required half block behind. The man was still in the car. Even if it had been possible for him to put on a disguise in a public vehicle, he could never have cloaked his bulk sufficiently to deceive.

The thing was getting on Keeler's nerves! He'd been blocked so much; in such unexpected places. A traffic policeman held up his hand! The red car slid by, in time to ignore the warning. His driver had to pull up or be arrested. Keeler jumped to his feet, his eyes glued on the fast-disappearing spot of red. He looked impatiently at the

cross-street traffic—and knew he could not wait for it to pass.

Crushing a two-dollar bill into the welcoming palm of the driver, he jumped from the cab, ran to the upper corner, and waked a dozing taxi driver by slamming the door of his machine until the glasses shivered in their frames. He called excitedly through the little round hole in the window before him.

"Catch up to that uptown car. I don't care what you do to get it—and I'll pay the fine if there is any."

In the upper nineties the taxi was a little over a block behind. Keeler saw the car stop. A figure swung from the front platform, dashed in front of the car, ran across the street, and disappeared through the doors of a German restaurant.

"Stop right here!" Keeler shouted to the chauffeur.

Five seconds later the little man walked into the same restaurant, sat down at a table, and ordered a split of Apollinaris.

There were six customers in the place —and an average of four waiters apiece. Over in a corner, partly screened by a dusty, frayed near palm, was the object of Keeler's curiosity. Before him, on the cloudy-looking tablecloth, was a seidel of Münchener beer.

Keeler counted the bubbles in his Apollinaris; because he didn't want to appear too vindictive toward this mysterious Unknown. A waiter added to the beer a raw-beef sandwich, with crisp lettuce cup-filled with finely chopped onions.

The man was going to eat real food. Keeler told himself that he would have known that raw meat was the man's diet. The brute looked it!

Suddenly, through the frayed palm leaves, across the full width of the restaurant, their eyes met and clashed. If the Unknown had endeavored to explain his presence; if he had even appeared to be apologetic for being there, nothing would have happened.

Instead of an expression of humility, however, his eyes seemed to flash defiant challenge! He stared brazenly into Keeler's inquiring face, his eyes bulging, his lower jaw set and grimly undershot, until he looked like some famous "pug" ready to send out tickets for a ten-round scrap.

The look stung Keeler to the core. He motioned a waiter to his own table and whispered a few words to him. The waiter, open-mouthed, incredulous, bent closer and asked him to repeat them. The little man, his gaze never wavering from his object of prey, repeated his request now distinctly.

The waiter disappeared through the short, swinging doors that led into the café. In a few seconds he returned. In his wake trailed a policeman. The two approached Keeler's table.

With a strange, weird cry, the mysterious Unknown jumped from his seat and, almost knocking down a waiter carrying two orders of pig knuckles and sauerkraut, leaped through the doorway into the street.

Keeler grabbed his hat and seized the wrist of the unsuspecting cop. He pulled him through the door just in time to see the victim cut through the side street, down toward Riverside Drive.

"This way!" bade Keeler shrilly, and started in pursuit.

"What's he done? What's he done?" inquired the policeman as often as he could get his wind.

In the two very short blocks to the river, they accumulated quite a pursuing party. Corner idlers, a waiting chauffeur, two delivery boys who shed provisions to the right and left in their progress, and several excited women, who shouted directions that were not practical.

The pursued dived into Riverside

Park. The policeman running down one winding path and Keeler running up another, cornered him. He offered no resistance. All three were so breathless that, for a minute after the impact, they made no move at all.

The Unknown's face was strained to apoplectic blues and purples. His prominent veins throbbed visibly. He breathed with the irregularity and unpleasant sound of an automobile exhaust that is sadly out of order. The policeman was the first to recover his normal state. He laid a heavy hand on the collar of the suspect who was a good four inches taller than the top of the bluecoat's hat—and brandished his nightstick.

Keeler stood by, still panting; and trembling with the little convulsive thrills of a rabbit which has been driven from his hole in the stone ledge by a ferret. Now that he'd made good on his muttered threat of less than a half hour ago, he felt no triumph.

"What did he take off'n you?" demanded the cop of the little man. "Has he got it on his person, d'you think, or did he get rid of it?"

"Why, he didn't take anything from me. He just—he——"

"Lift your hands from my collar, or I'll break every bone in your body!" the Unknown thundered.

"Here youse, now, none of that! See?" The cop punctuated the admonition with a forceful tap of the stick and awaited further explanation from Keeler.

With one mighty shake the suspect cast the officer from his person and strode over to Keeler.

"You fool!" he bellowed. "You blunderer! You poor, little, underdone shrimp! Do you know who I am?"

The open-mouthed audience drew closer in frank hero worship of the big man and frank contempt of the little one.

Keeler mouthed some unintelligible syllables.

The Unknown flapped back his coat. There on his vest flashed the badge of the United States secret service!

From his pocket he drew his certificate bearing his photograph. Then he snapped his thumb and forefinger under Keeler's nose—twice.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The next installment of this novel will appear in the issue on sale June 23rd, two weeks hence. Reserve your copy.

SIZING UP THE STRANGER

A FAMOUS woman novelist, who at times uses rather slangy and strong language, was with a group of her friends at a prominent society gathering in New York City. Across the room was an exceedingly distinguished-looking white-haired woman.

"Who is that aristocratic-looking old lady over there?" asked the novelist.

At that, her friends, all of whom knew the distinguished-looking woman, began to make fun of the writer, asking her to put up her lorgnette and see if she could not recognize her.

The novelist, who was widely known as an ardent and radical suffragist, did as directed, and looked at the distinguished stranger for several minutes. After that she lowered her lorgnette, and, turning to her friends, remarked solemnly:

"Durned if I don't think she's an antisuffragist."

A Roaring Finish

By Hamish McLaurin

As funny a story of the stage as you have ever read. How a "diving Venus" becomes a headliner with the aid of what the theatrical folks would call a "fat finish"

IN selecting Jake Madison as her manager, before she even began her career, Divina, "The Matchless Mermaid," showed more judgment than she did in most things. The gods had blessed her with a figure which their celestial consorts might well have envied; they had given her hair that made other women covetous every time they looked at it, and for good measure they had thrown in features whose overgenerous proportions were just the sort to look best back of the footlights; but there the divine endowment had ceased abruptly. Even Divina's best friends accepted without comment the fact that Divina had no more sense than a goldfish. Divina herself, after she was well embarked upon the choppy sea of vaudeville, cheerfully summed up her own mental shortcomings in the following admission:

"I got to be handled, that's all. I can't talk to these managers. I'd be owing them money the end of the second week."

Therefore, when the success of a certain "Diving Venus" became so marked that she was featured in a Broadway "revue," and her "beauty secrets" were syndicated in the papers all over the country, Divina, moved to emulation, had consulted Jake Madison. She knew he was in the show business some way, but at that time she hadn't the slightest notion what a good showman he really was.

Divina hadn't the slightest notion of most anything, so far as that went, but she knew that when Jake boarded at her mother's he was "laying off," and she had heard him gossiping about "split weeks," and being given "a bad spot," and "knocking 'em off their seats," and other phrases of the sort, all of which signified little or nothing to her, except that they had a "professional" sound. Her mother's boarding house was not near Times Square, and hence patronized but rarely by theatrical folk. Jake always stopped there because it was handy to a saloon where a friend of his tended bar.

"My shape's as good as that dame's," Divina had proclaimed to Jake, pointing to the beauty secrets column, "and I can dive all them fancy dives, too."

"It ain't the diving, so much," commented Jake sagely; "you got to be there with the figure, that's all."

"Well, I'm there!" declared Divina, in whom false modesty found no abiding place. "You ask any of the bunch I go down to Coney with; any of the boys, I mean. The girls wouldn't give me credit."

"I don't know, Fernette." Jake, of course, had not yet evolved the name now so familiar on the three sheets, and his star was still Miss Fernette Gallagher. "I don't know; you might put it over on the small time, at that. I don't think it's been done on the three-a-day yet."

"It won't do no harm to try, will it?"

"No, I suppose not. I ain't doing

anything right now—only those tanks cost like blazes."

"How much?"

"It's a fur-lined cinch they cost more than I want to gamble—more than you ever saw in your life. And then there's the set."

"The what?"

"The set—the scenery. You got to carry your own stuff, or they say you're cheating, and they won't pay you enough to live on."

"Gee, I never thought of that."

"Never mind, kid. If I decide there's a chance to feature you in a diving act, I'll do all the thinking. I'll see Abe Wolff in the morning and maybe I can start something. You better come with me so he can look you over."

In the office of the well-known Mr. Wolff the next morning, Jake did the talking and Fernette did the looking, with the result that Wolff decided to produce the act, provided Fernette would first bring her bathing tights down to a neighboring natatorium and "show him what she had."

Three weeks later the act was tried out, at a small town in New Jersey, convenient to the metropolis, yet sufficiently insignificant to make it fairly certain that no booking agent in search of new features would see the performance and perhaps carry away a bad impression of it before it was "broken in." Pending the purchase of special scenery, Jake made use of the "wood wings" and such other forest effects as the little theater boasted.

Barring a slight throw over in her jackknife dive, Fernette acquitted herself quite creditably. Jake, arrayed in evening clothes, which improved his appearance almost unbelievably, had made his opening address and all the announcements with an assurance acquired by many years of working the paddle game with a circus, and selling patent whetstones on half the street corners of the nation. The audience was kindly enough, for diving acts were a novelty then, and when Fernette, in her bath robe, had taken three bows, Jake busied himself about the tank with a smile of pleased satisfaction. Fernette was openly, if moistly, jubilant.

"I guess we got 'em, didn't we, Jake?" she grinned, pausing on her way to her dressing room.

"Looks that way, kid, but those heckers out front are no judges. Wait till we hear what Wolff says."

The producer came around from the front of the house presently and summoned Jake to a conference in Fernette's dressing room.

"It won't do the way it is now," was his verdict. "There's not enough to it. You know what I mean? The kid looks great and does her dives all right, and you—you've got the grandest flow of language I ever heard issue from the human lips, but that ain't enough. There's no snap to the act; no life, no laughs, nothing picturesque. Get me?"

"I could put some gags in my announcements," suggested Jake.

"That might help, yes; but it's not what I'm after. The act has no story. The kid has no excuse for being out there in the woods doing those stunts. In short, there's no class to the thing yet, and without class you don't get big money. I can't see myself getting that jungle setting you want, and all those grass mats and set trees and things until I know I've got an act I can sell at a figure that will pull me out of the hole and then some. This tank has set me back far enough already."

"How would this do?" offered Jake, who had been thinking hard while Wolff was talking. "The kid comes skipping on to the stage chasing a phony butterfly or something, see? She's dressed as a little country girl, or maybe it would be better to have her one of these wood nymphs."

"What do you mean, wooden imp?" interposed Fernette suspiciously.

"Shut up!" replied Jake, without the faintest intention of being impolite. "I'm trying to dope this thing out. Well, the butterfly gets away from her —see?—and then she lets on like she's awful tired and hot. Just then she catches sight of the pool—that's the tank—and says: 'Gee, that looks good. I'm sweating like everything. I think I'll go in swimming'—not just those words, you know, but something to plant the idea—and then she goes behind a bush and strips and——"

"And the house is pinched!" finished Wolff.

"No, no; she has her black bathing tights on underneath."

"A wood nymph with black tights on would be a fine combination, wouldn't it? Or a little country girl, either."

"Why couldn't I wear light pink ones?" asked Fernette.

"There's only about two houses in the country where they'd play you if you did that," stated Wolff.

"These girls that does them poses plasticky gets away with it."

"Yes, but they're standing still, in a picture frame. You'd be just plain naked if you went into that tank in fleshings."

"Well, then, here," Jake persisted. "Suppose we make her an old witch who lives out there in the woods—'The Witch of the Crystal Pool' we would call her—and a young guy comes wandering through the woods with a basket of berries or something he's picked, and the old witch asks him to give her some of them. He turns her down—see?—and she gets so sore that she casts a spell over him and glues him right to the spot where he's standing, facing the pool."

"Who's going to play this young guy —you?" interrupted Wolff.

"It ain't as if I couldn't," retorted Jake. "I can make a lot of these fresh juveniles look like volunteer entertainers at a church sociable, even to-day, but I won't have to. We can get a cheap kid that will do well enough—I'm going to need some one to help me with that tank, anyhow. He don't have to know how to act; all this will be pantomime and we can have the story put on a slide and thrown on the screen before the act goes on."

"What's the rest of it? What happens next?" prompted Fernette.

"Why, after she gets the guy standing there like a dummy she rubs it in by changing herself into a beautiful young girl and doing dives in the pool. He can't move—see?—and that's the way she gets even with him for being so tight with his berries."

"Not enough action!" said Wolff. "You can't leave this fellow standing there all during the act. The audience would kid the life out of him!"

"All right, we'll have him break the spell," returned the resourceful Jake. "After she does about two dives he falls in love with her so hard he busts the charm and goes nutty. He races up the slope to one springboard and, just as he gets there, the kid dives in and swims to the board at the other end of the tank. Then the young guy runs downstage again, looks all around for her, and when he sees her on the other springboard he runs up there and the kid makes her get-away the same as before."

"That's more like," approved Wolff. "What's the finish?"

"He loses his balance reaching for her, falls into the pool, and gets drowned. The kid slips into the old witch's cloak and wig and poses on the edge of the pool, giving him the ha-ha; green light on his drowning struggles; curtain."

That, in its essentials, was the act which Divina presented next. Wolff, once convinced, was generous in his production, and under his direction the

scene painter and the electrician managed to carry out Jake's ideas, skillfully converting the steel-and-plate-glass tank into the semblance of a huge, hollow crystal full of water, set in the crater of a rocky mound in the jungle. The side toward the footlights was, of course, unobstructed, in order that the audience might have the full benefit of what Jake styled in his speech Divina's "piscatorial undulations."

Two weeks elapsed, during which the boy for the part of the witch's victim was secured, the scenery completed, and the act rehearsed. Then it "tried out" again in another of the neighboring small towns whose vaudeville theaters are known to the profession as "hideaways."

At the first performance Jake's foresight in having the story of the act told first by a stereopticon slide was amply rewarded. Fernette, as an actress, even in the rôle of a stooped old crone with a wig covering her face and not a word to say, was productive of nothing but annoyance. The folks in the audience never seemed to glean the slightest inkling of what the act was all about until Fernette threw off her cloak and stepped out on to the springboard in her black tights. Then they instantly ceased caring what it was about. They applauded her every dive, laughed at the attempts of the youthful victim to catch her, and enjoyed themselves thoroughly until she reappeared as the witch and gloated over the drowning struggles of her prey. They didn't seem to like that part so much, and the curtain calls were few and perfunctory.

"We have to make them laugh," announced Wolff, joining Jake and the boy after he had seen the evening performance. "I had Joe Meyer up to look you over, and when it came to talking price he wouldn't book you at half what I'm asking. He says the first part of the act doesn't amount to anything, and that when you do get them going—where Herman, here, is trying to catch her—you pull that gruesome finish, and blah! goes your act."

"I know it. I seen that," admitted Jake. "When it comes to acting Fernette is something terrible. It ain't all her fault, though. There's something wrong with the story. They want to laugh, and we make them laugh, and they aren't looking for that kind of a finish. They don't want it."

"Why don't you change it to the old Sleeping Beauty stuff," suggested Herman, still puffing from the effort required to give with conscientious fidelity his conception of a crazy man drowning in a pool of enchanted water.

"Sleeping Beauty?" repeated Jake, puzzled.

"Yes, something like that. Instead of me being such a slob that I won't give an old lady a strawberry when she hits me for it, make me a prince in disguise. Make Fernette an enchanted princess that has to be kissed by a prince before she can change back."

"Fixing it up pretty sweet for yourself, aren't you?" commented Jake.

"Go ahead, Herman," said Wolff; "it sounds good."

"Well, at the opening," Herman went on, glancing dubiously at Jake, "I could come on and find this old witch in trouble and I'd help her out—pull a thorn out of her foot, or something."

"That'll make a pretty scene," muttered Jake.

"Have me chase away a lion, then; I don't care."

"Going to change it into an animal act, eh?"

"Oh, give the boy a chance, Jake!" cut in Wolff. "His idea sounds better than yours already. Go ahead, Herman. What do you do next?"

"She's so much obliged to me that she kisses me and that changes her back into the princess."

"I thought you had to do the kissing," Jake reminded him.

Herman was not to be baffled. "I do," he asserted stoutly. "When she kisses me it changes her into the princess, all right—into her tights, you know—but before I can get her for my wife *I* have to kiss *her,* and then is when she breaks away and does her dives, with me chasing her, see?"

"And the finish?" queried Wolff.

"I catch her," ended Herman simply.

"Under water!" added Jake with enthusiasm, converted at last, and seeing the possibilities of the situation. "You overtake her under water and go into a clinch in the center of the plate glass with the spotlight on you."

"Fine!" agreed Wolff. "Work it up that way, Jake, and we'll try it the last half of the week. Rehearse every morning, and for Heaven's sake, try to get a little comedy into the first scene somehow."

"Isn't Fernette's acting funny to you?"

"To me it is, yes; but to these audiences it's nothing but just plain punk. Keep after her about it, and next Friday I'll have somebody up from the booking office to see you again. This time it's got to be right. Don't forget that." And perceiving at this point that Herman was showing symptoms of being about to ask, "Where do we go next week?" Mr. Wolff hastily pushed open the stage door and departed.

At rehearsals the new finish gave promise of being a vast improvement, for Fernette assuredly clinched much better than she gloated. By Friday the act was really a good act, and the booking agent who came to look at it ungrudgingly said so. Wolff's efforts to make him say it was a great headliner fell on unsympathetic ears, however, and the ensuing battle over the amount to be received for the act was long and heartbreaking. In the end a route was arranged quite long enough and consecutive enough to relieve all concerned of any reason for present worry; that is, all but Mr. Wolff. He continued to fume about the niggardly price that the powers in control had set upon Divina and her offering; he was inclined to be captious if the least thing went wrong in the playing of the act, or in the moving of it from town to town; he selected Jake as the object on which to vent his temper in such cases; and he declared time and again that the profit he was making on the production was not worth the bother of handling it.

"Wait till we've worked a few weeks more and I'll give him a chance to get rid of this act if he wants to," Jake confided to Fernette one night, after a telegram had come, questioning the accuracy of the excess baggage charge he had included in his weekly report. "I'm getting sick of being the goat all the time."

"What are you going to do?" Fernette asked, a bit anxiously.

"I'll buy the act from him myself."

"Oh, but Jake, could you book it after we've played out the rest of these contracts?"

"Kid, I was booking acts when you were playing with your toes."

"I know, but ain't you afraid Wolff might still be sore on you, and try to crab you with the managers?"

"What for? He'll put the price up high enough, don't you worry, and be glad to have us off his hands. Wolff isn't really sore on me, Fernette; he's sore on himself, and he's just taking it out on me. He knows there is still something wrong with this act, but he doesn't know how to fix it, and that's the whole trouble. Now, *I* know what's the matter with this act."

"I thought we was doing pretty well," pouted Fernette.

"Oh, *you're* satisfied, of course. All you have to do is play around in and out of the water until that curly-headed young Dutchman finally catches you and gives you a hug. And I guess you don't

like those hugs pretty well, nor nothing. I notice lately he squeezes you so tight that the bubbles come up to the top like one of these sanitary water coolers."

"He says that's his artistic temperament," explained the hugged one.

"Temperament my foot! Some night he'll squeeze you so tight you'll let *all* your breath out and won't be able to hold the picture until the curtain is down. But never mind; it's pretty soft for you. You ought to see me sweating with that blasted tank; arguing with stage hands; battling with transfer men; fixing baggage men; and studying time-tables until my brain curdles. And all on a salary; not a chance for any extra money unless I graft it."

"I *have* seen you, Jake," said Fernette, patting him on the arm, "and it's pretty tough. Guess I never stopped to think about your end of it—I was so tickled to be on the stage myself. But whatever you say is all right with me, Jake. What's the big idea?"

"Why, just this," said Jake, quite mollified. "This act needs to be circused."

"Huh?"

"It needs extra advertising, outside of just what it gets along with the other acts on the bill. It needs something to make it a box-office draw, and I'm the boy that's going to turn the trick."

With that, Jake explained to Fernette the scheme which has since been used all over the country, and which has caused countless thousands to roll in their seats with laughter. It was nothing less than the diving and floating contest, and, from a showman's point of view, it was a stroke of genius. The idea was to advertise that, on certain nights, immediately after Divina's performance, there would be contests in swimming, diving, and floating, open to all comers, and rewarded with cash prizes.

"We'll get plenty of comedy into it by having you do some of your hardest floating stunts," said Jake, "and then making them try to do the same things. The one that comes closest cops the money."

His plans worked out beyond Jake's most sanguine hopes. The first time that he was within easy distance of New York he went to see Wolff and asked him what he would take for the act. Wolff named a price which Jake, with his new idea to give him courage, promptly produced in cash, and the deal was concluded. Next came an interview with the booking manager for a circuit of popular-priced vaudeville houses in New York, and when he got back for the matinée performance, Jake reported that they were to get a showing at one of the most widely patronized theaters in the Bronx, with plenty of time to follow, provided the new idea was successful.

Of its success there was never any doubt after the first performance. With the aid of the house press agent and a few judiciously selected "plants"—boys and girls of the neighborhood who entered willingly for a small monetary consideration—the contest was staged amid vast snorting, splashing, and gurgling from the contestants, and howls of glee from the audience. Jake demanded more money for the act, got it, and for several weeks thereafter piloted Divina, The Matchless Mermaid, from one small New York theater to another, leaving each one damp, but delighted.

He began to have dreams of the "big time," the high-class vaudeville houses, where almost incredible sums were paid, sometimes, for acts which could be "featured." He even got a representative of one of these houses to come and look at the act, but that was as far as negotiations in that direction progressed.

"The finish isn't strong enough," was the alert young agent's criticism. "The contest is very funny in spots, and the

house likes it for a while, but it doesn't build up to a climax. You simply decide which one gave the best exhibition, and the rest of them stand around dripping and disappointed, and you award the prize, and the curtain comes down. There's no surprise, no big laugh; nothing to wind the act up with a roar. I couldn't use it the way it is."

It is while things stand at this stage, and Jake is cudgeling his brains for that elusive desideratum, "a strong finish," that the heart interest enters this narrative.

Katrina Syriac, late of Poland, now of Avenue B, was quite penniless and her mother was very ill. There was no Mr. Syriac any more. There had been, but a regrettable lethargy on his part in the path of a subway cave-in had brought about his instant and permanent obliteration. Katrina's mother had been ill at the time of the accident and had remained ill ever since, so Katrina had secured a job for the summer, handing out towels in a Brighton Beach bathhouse. That was all right while it lasted, but now it was almost December and she had secured no other work. She needed money desperately. Her mother continued to be very ill. The reason she was so ill was that no human being could drink as much raw liquor as she did and be anything else. The reason Katrina craved money so earnestly was that she had conceived an unalterable distaste for her mother's maudlin society, and was seeking the first opportunity to forsake the parental roof for good. Under these circumstances Katrina becomes, of course, a very pathetic little figure.

"Little figure" scarcely expresses it, however. Katrina was rather more than plump. In fact, it seemed odd that a girl of sixteen, who had never known leisure, could have found time to accumulate so much superfluous flesh. Just at present her all-enveloping cushions of fat were standing her in good stead, serving as they did to help keep out the cold, a task of which her clothes alone would have been quite incapable.

One evening, after Katrina had remained on the street as long as she could stand the chill of it, she was perforce hurrying home, when the blatant type advertising Divina's diving and floating contests thrust itself upon her attention in front of the neighborhood vaudeville theater, a structure so pretentious, by the way, that it might have surprised a great many New Yorkers who lived in far more prosperous quarters of the metropolis.

Carefully Katrina spelled out the announcement, taking note of the five-dollar prizes to individual winners during the week, and the grand prize of twenty-five dollars to the winner of the finals on Saturday night, and, having been assured at the box office that girls might enter if they wish, she continued homeward with the glow of a great hope in her heart. For Katrina knew she could float; the other girls at the beach had been pitiful, sputtering spectacles beside Katrina when it came to that department of aquatics, and in her heart she felt she had that contest as good as won, if only she might find means to enter it.

Had Mr. Gerstoff, the secondhand furniture man next door, known what was in Katrina's mind, he might have understood the strange request which she made of him the morning after she had read Jake's alluring poster. What Katrina wanted, it seemed, was possession of the ripped and ragged piece of lining cloth which covered the back and under side of an old divan Mr. Gerstoff had just purchased, and which still stood on the sidewalk by his door, pending removal to the back of the shop for repairs.

Mr. Gerstoff couldn't conceive what Katrina wanted it for, and Katrina wouldn't tell him. True, the cloth was

a lively scarlet, particularly the portion underneath, which covered the springs, but it was ripped in several places and badly worn around the edges. These drawbacks notwithstanding, Katrina saw in it material for a bathing suit, and Mr. Gerstoff, recalling the not infrequent occasions when Katrina had taken care of the Gerstoff baby for hours on end, finally let her rip off the cloth and take it home.

Katrina set to work with feverish energy, or as near to that state as one of her figure and temperament could come. She had but three days in which to complete the suit, and she had certain ideas as to its design which must needs be carefully carried out.

Her model was by no means the sort of suit which was supplied at the bathhouse where she had worked. Not at all. Katrina had kept her eyes open, and the suits which had caught her fancy most were those affected by certain ladies of the chorus who frequented the beach a good deal up to the time the burlesque companies sent out calls for rehearsal.

These damsels seemed to vie with each other in seeing how close they could come to wearing the same sort of bathing suits on the beach that they wore on the stage, and still not fall under the disfavor of the law.

Katrina remembered those suits very distinctly and by that fortunate faculty of self-delusion with which most of us are endowed she saw herself looking quite bewitching in one built on the same lines.

Therefore, she built one, and when she showed up for the contest and discovered that, as it happened, she was the only girl entered, she felt so assured as to the modishness of her costume, and so confident of her floating ability, that she donned the suit in the dressing room assigned to her, slipped on the old raincoat which was to serve as a bath robe, and took her place in the wings without the least qualm of apprehension. Besides, there was that possible thirty dollars to be thought of, and on Avenue B thirty dollars looks as big as a thousand on Broadway.

It was her first experience behind the scenes, and she watched the progress of the pantomime in a sort of daze. When Divina stepped out on the springboard to escape Herman's mad pursuit, Katrina experienced for the first time a faint tremor of apprehension; the board was much higher above the water than she had expected. What diving she had done had been from a raft, and she had not cared much for it, anyhow, but in the excitement of what followed in the tank she forget her fears and applauded delightedly when Herman finally caught Fernette and gave her the kiss that made her his.

What happened thereafter may be best described, perhaps, in the words of the closest eyewitness, to wit: Mr. Jake Madison.

"When Fernette and Herman had taken their bows," said Jake to Fernette's mother that night, "I began counting up the entries in the contest. There were four or five boys and this one girl. She was standing back in the shadow of a wing and I didn't take more than half a look at her. I told Herman to send her on last, after the boys had finished, and we'd try to throw her the contest, same as we always threw the chariot race to the woman in the old circus days.

"I had a photographer there to-night to take some flashes of the contest to use in some ads I'm working up, and when I saw we had a girl in the bunch I told him to wait until she came out to make her first dive. All the time the boys were trying to float like Fernette, this camera man was monkeying with his tripod on the springboard opposite the one we were using. The board was narrow, of course, and he seemed to be having a devil of a time balancing

the camera so it would stay put. He had a stage hand roosting on the back corner of the tank with the flash light gun, and, about the time the last boy crawled out of the tank, he gave me the high sign that he was all ready. I nodded to Herman, who looked as if he was having some kind of a convulsion in the wings, and he starts the girl out on the springboard.

"Well, I wish you could have heard that house. Laugh? They sent up a holler that pretty near knocked the poor kid off the springboard. And not only the audience but the orchestra and the stage hands and me and every one else —we all threw a fit. She was the screamingest-looking thing I ever saw in my life. She has a funny, boob face to go in with, like a rabbit with both cheeks full of cabbage, and she had her hair pulled back so tight it hiked her eyebrows up on top of her head some place."

"And her shape," said Fernette. "My Gawd!"

"You've seen the man in the advertisements," continued Jake, "the man that's made out of automobile tires? Well, that's her. You take a figure like that and dress it up in a starchy, red bathing suit intended for the prize doll in the 'Follies,' and you get the picture."

"The waist of the suit was too short in front, maw," giggled Fernette, "and the material was so stiff that the skirt stuck straight out ahead of her. She could have et a meal off it."

"A light lunch, maybe," corrected Jake. "There wasn't very much of that skirt, you know, kid. But there was quite a plenty of red knickerbockers looming up underneath."

"She must have been a sight," said Mrs. Gallagher.

"She was, but that wasn't the best of it. When the house started to laugh the poor kid got wise that something must be wrong, so she begins patting down her skirt, and digging her toe into the board, and swaying her shoulders back and forth just like a youngster that's being asked to recite 'Little Bo Peep' before company. That started the house off worse than ever, and it must have been two or three minutes before I could quit laughing myself and make a stab at an announcement."

"You never did get that announcement out of your system," Fernette recalled.

"Well, hardly. As soon as I began to talk, that photographer ducked under his little black cloth to get a focus on the red bathing suit, but for some reason the kid decided it was time to dive, so in she went and—oh, glory!—what a splash she did make!"

"She done a regular belly flopper, maw," explained Fernette.

"She got me with about a bucketful," Jake went on, "and I was halfway to the footlights. To make it real good, just before she dived, the stage hand on the tank saw she was going to, so he touched off the flash light. The camera guy still had his head under the cloth. He wasn't looking for the explosion, and when it went off—blooie!—right in his ear, I'm a Chinaman if *he* didn't fall into the tank, too, camera and all!"

"For evermore!" ejaculated Mrs. Gallagher.

"Can you imagine the riot?" chuckled Jake. "I thought that audience would have to be carried out, one at a time. The poor kid floundered around in the tank, with the dye coming out of her bathing suit so fast the water began to look like pink lemonade, and, of course, that was good for another big laugh as soon as the people saw it. I was laughing at it myself when I noticed that she was 'glug-glugging' pretty bad, and then it came over me all of a sudden that she'd had the wind knocked out of her and I'd better get her out of there. There was no time to think

about clothes, so up the side of the tank I went, and hung over the edge on my stomach, with my coat tails to the audience, waiting for her to come to the top again where I could reach her."

"She came up all right, didn't she?" Mrs. Gallagher asked anxiously.

"She certainly did," said Jake, "and when she went down again she had me with her!"

"I thought I'd die, maw," said Fernette, squirming with glee at the recollection.

"Yes, and *I* could have died at the same time for all the good you were just then," retorted Jake. "If it hadn't been for that stage hand on the tank the good Lord knows when we would have got that young hippo out of there. You and Herman are a fine pair of life-savers, you are!"

"Well, anyhow, it gives us the finish we've been looking for," announced Fernette, getting ready to retire.

"How, dearie?" asked her mother.

"Why, don't you *see* it?" cried Jake, "I hired that fat girl on the spot for fifteen a week, and Herman is going to play the camera man. We'll pull that whole accident right over again at every contest. If that doesn't land us on the big time inside of a month I'll quit the show business."

Jake is still in the business.

HOW HAY SPELLED IT

JAMES HAY, JUNIOR, whose graphic pen has made him famous in the magazine and newspaper world, is the acknowledged wit of the National Press Club at Washington, and he is remarkable also for his purring quality of voice and never-failing courtesy.

One morning not long ago, however, Mr. Hay awoke with an aching tooth, which gave him trouble all day, and by the time evening came and he walked into the dining room of the Press Club for dinner, his nerves were badly on edge.

Just about this time, Jesse Suter, an ardent admirer of Hay, came in, convoying a brand-new congressman who, never before having visited the august precincts of the Press Club, decided to start right in to making friends with the members.

Suter introduced the Native Son to each one at the table, saying a few well-chosen words about each, and mentioning the newspaper connections. The honorable member from Squash Center was a little bewildered by the rapid-fire introductions, and only recovered himself partially when he shook hands with Hay, but had the misfortune not to catch his name. With a wild desire to make good, the country visitor pulled that old but honorable bromide with the hope of covering up his bad hearing, and asked: "How do you spell your name?" Jim glanced at him for a moment through rapidly contracting pupils, and then, in the Virginia drawl which has put the fear of the Lord into many faint hearts, hissed: "H-A-Y, you twenty-two-caliber, twentieth-century, would-be Demosthenes! How do you suppose I spell it?"

Utterly dismayed, but wildly trying to save the day by turning his faux pas into something really subtle, the statesman replied: "Hay—I never heard the name before." Whereupon, the genial yet suffering Mr. Hay turned both barrels of his forty-four-centimeter howitzer on the congressman and bawled out: "Well, you've got nothing on me, you cadaverous-looking, blue-nosed, cabbage-eating simp—I never heard of you, either!" whereupon the statesman turned tail and flew with the last words of the master of invective ringing in his drooping ears, and muttering to himself: "At least I have been insulted by an expert."

Workaday Adventures

THE WELL SHOOTER

By Berton Braley

[In the Pennsylvania and New York oil fields there are comparatively few oil wells that "flow" of themselves. They have to be pumped. To facilitate pumping and to quicken the underground flow of oil, nitroglycerin is lowered to the bottom of the well and set off by the concussion of a "go-devil" or chaser dropped on top of it. The man in charge of this difficult and dangerous work is called a well shooter.]

WHEN the derrick is built and the well is drilled
To the oil sands down below,
They send around for the guy who's skilled
In helpin' that oil to flow;
For it may be big and it may be not,
But you can't 'most always tell,
Till after that nitro charge is shot
By the feller who shoots the well.

He's a nitroglycerin Johnny,
With a kind of a breezy way;
The smile of the scamp is bonny
An' the talk of the lad is gay.
To care he seems a stranger,
An' you never on earth could tell
That he works in deadly danger,
This feller who shoots the well.

His wagon it rattles acrost the hills,
An' it makes you hold your breath,
An' it gives you a lovely set of chills
When you think of his load of death,
With that nitroglycerin sloppin' about
An' him a-singin' free,
Though he knows if a can of the stuff fell out
He'd muss up the scenery!

He's a nitroglycerin kiddo
An' he's got to keep his wits,
Or he'll leave his wife a widow
To a lot of scattered bits.
He needs a head that's level
An' a nerve you can't dispel,
An' he mustn't fear man or devil,
This feller who shoots the well.

He lowers them long torpedoes through
The hole that the drills has made,
An' you notice he does it careful, too,
For his is a risky trade.
Then he lets that iron devil drop
An' he runs like Billy Hell,
An' a geyser climbs to the derrick top
—An' you know that he's shot the well.

An' whether the well is splendid
Or a kind of a pindlin' one,
His part of the work is ended,
His share of the job is done.
With his lips a-whistlin' happy
An' his hat cocked on his knob,
This nitroglycerin chappy
Moves on to another job!

Other verses in the series of "Workaday Adventures" appeared in THE POPULAR dated April 23d and May 23d. Others will follow.

Devised and Bequeathed

By Donn Byrne

Author of "Out of Egypt," "Black Medicine," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF THE FIRST PART

Left a million dollars by his famous stock-broking uncle, Bradford Dawson's astonishment is only equaled by his feeling on learning that the legacy is a bluff: in reality a few thousands are his, but the bulk of the fortune is in imaginary stocks and bonds. Further surprise also comes to him when the uncle's confidential lawyer advises Dawson to play the game for what it is worth. Dwyer, the shrewd counsel, tells him to let the world —especially the world of Wall Street—believe him rich. It will help him in business. Dawson consents, and immediately the flies and bees swarm around the honey pot. Palmer, a shady come-on artist, arrives to place an order and wheedle Dawson; Don Jaime Braga, a Porto Rican plunger, comes along with money to invest, and makes advances of great friendship; Dawson's rich maiden aunt sends him fifty thousand dollars to invest; and so it goes. The young fellow finds himself overwhelmed with attention and business. His sweetheart, Vashti Nelson, a cold, ambitious society girl, smiles upon him and urges him to prove his mettle under the circumstances. Dawson, protesting that he fears his false castle of bluff and dreams will come tumbling down, invests heavily in cotton. Just at that time the war in Europe flames into life. Dawson is worried, distracted, but Vashti Nelson expresses her contempt of his lack of unscrupulousness. She bids him fight and take all the unfair advantage he may. Dawson is nonplused by her selfishness and hardness. He cannot help contrast her with his little secretary, Joan Wister, who possesses high ideals, fearlessness, and proves his most capable aid in the business war.

(In Two Parts—Part Two)

CHAPTER XVI.

THE door of the private office opened and Prothero blinked in behind his thick pince-nez.

"Señor Braga to see you, Mr. Dawson," he announced.

Braga walked in, sallow, heavy, somnolent, with his head on one side like an observant bird. His neck was sunk deep in a huge fur overcoat; and the fur cap on his head suggested somehow the tuft of plumage on the head of a hawk. He glanced over the desks, the telephone, the ticker, the miniature price board, and fixed his keen eye on Dawson.

"How is the fortune factory?" he asked.

"Glad to see you back in town, sir," Dawson called cheerily. "I saw that interview with you in the paper this morning. First I heard about your coming. The fortune factory's going pretty well, sir. Cotton is down to six cents this morning. I've got two thousand bales at that."

"Yes?" he queried.

"And then it's going up again. I buy at a rise of every fifty points, and when I decide to sell, it will net you thirty per cent on your money, which isn't too bad."

"Oh, I've made more," the Porto Rican smiled. "How are your other affairs?"

"Very well, thank you." Dawson was surprised. It didn't tally with what he had heard of Braga to take an interest in matters outside business.

"Do you see much of Rudyard Palmer?" he asked.

"Rather a good deal," Dawson answered. "He goes around a lot to dances, and I've met him at them sev-

This story began in the number of the POPULAR dated May 23rd.

eral times. Likewise he comes in here regularly and tries to sell me stock in various companies. He made me an attractive offer this morning. Several of the company are going in on a deal in a sugar plantation outside Havana. It sounded awfully good."

"He must like you," Braga remarked. His mouth twisted in a wry grin.

"Oh, I don't know," Dawson laughed. "I guess he only wants my money."

"He must like you very much to forget all you said that morning."

"Oh"—Dawson waved his hand lightly—"he never heard about that. I suppose you thought better of it and let it rest."

The Porto Rican leaned back and lighted a villainous cigarette. He took a puff or two, watched the ash of the paper curl around the ash of the tobacco, and smiled.

"Oh, no," he said slowly. "I told him."

"You told him?" Dawson laughed loudly. "Well, he's been eating out of my hand ever since."

Braga leaned forward in his chair. The wry smile went out of his eyes, and his mouth set to seriousness. He looked full at Dawson.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Dawson," he said slowly. "I'm afraid that I've put my affairs in the hands of a very young and very green and very callow young man. If you were one-tenth as bad a judge of cotton as you are of human nature, you would be ruined within a week. Your bland, gay, and winning friend, Mr. Palmer, is ready and working to blow you off the earth. I'm just about one week in time to save you."

He leaned back, his eyes raised to the ceiling, his cigarette neatly balanced between middle and forefinger.

"Would it surprise you to hear that Mr. Palmer has an outstanding bet of one thousand dollars that within six months he will have both your million and your fiancée. Yes, it does surprise you, I see."

Dawson was on his feet, his eyes blazing, his jaw thrust forward, his shoulders set.

"He's bet—— Are you sure of that?" His voice rose to a shout.

"Yes, yes. I shouldn't say it if I weren't," the Latin answered easily. "Where are you going?"

Dawson had nearly overturned desk and table. He sprang across the room to his hat. The little secretary had started up with a white face. Braga looked at him with annoyance.

"There you are, very young, very callow. My dear young man, listen to me. I'm seldom interested in young men. I am in you, but you are disappointing me. You want to fight him, don't you?"

"I'm going to give that pup a lacing he'll never forget, and I'm going now." Dawson's face was purple with rage.

"And you're going to get arrested for it, too, I might add. You are going to give your future wife a great deal of undesirable publicity, because Palmer will see to it that this part of the quarrel is disclosed. Thirdly, you are going to alienate the confidence of nearly all of your customers. And Palmer will have beaten you on the first encounter, hands down. You see that, don't you? Of course you do."

Dawson's face had fallen. Rage and humiliation showed on it in strong lines and high colors. He looked at Braga with heavy, baffled eyes.

"Now, if I were to have a little quarrel with a man like Palmer," said the latter suavely, "and if it were a question, as I think it is with you, as to which of us should remain alive and victorious, I should think out something worth while. You remember I once advised you to shoot the crows on your yam patch. If you had gone into that sugar-plantation deal, you would

have been ruined. You must finish Palmer once and for all."

"Yes, but how?" Dawson asked savagely. "Tell me how!"

"My boy, you mustn't ask me. You must find it out for yourself. If I were doing it, I would probably use some weapon Palmer was not acquainted with, a piece of information, a block of bonds, or something like that. For instance, I know that this morning the *Chemnitz,* of the Associated Fruit Company, was taken in the Caribbean by a British cruiser, and her sister ship, the *Heidelberg,* was sunk. That information will not be made public for four days yet, and there's reams of Associated Fruit stock on the market. I might use that. I might devise some little scene with it to finish Palmer in the financial business. There are a thousand things I might do."

He looked at his watch and stood up suddenly.

"Good heavens! It's three o'clock, and I've an appointment at three-fifteen. And here I am gossiping like an old woman. Good-by, my boy, good luck. Sit down and think it over."

He shook hands quickly and started toward the door. Dawson sank into his swivel chair, gripped the edge of his desk with both hands, and gazed through the window at the leaden February sky. Braga turned for a moment at the door.

"Yes," he said slowly, as if to himself, "I think I should use that little Caribbean affair if I were you. There are quite a lot of possibilities in it. In fact, I'm certain I should." And he went off, chuckling.

CHAPTER XVII.

"And, Prothero," Dawson directed the next morning, "you will leave this door between the two offices slightly ajar, and when Mr. Palmer comes in—he'll be in within a few minutes—you will tell him I'm telephoning, and ask him to wait a few moments. Do you understand?"

"I understand," Prothero answered, like an automaton.

"Well, that's all right," Dawson said. "Get out now and wait."

Prothero disappeared, leaving the door ajar. In a few minutes Dawson heard the outer door open, and the silky voice of Palmer.

"Is Dawson in?" he asked.

"He's telephoning just now," Prothero answered. "He'll be through in a moment."

Dawson took the receiver from the hook of his instrument, held the hook firmly in place, and raised the receiver to his ear.

"Of course I understand," he said into the mouthpiece.

He could hear the shuffle of Palmer's feet as he sat down, and the tap-tapping of his cane on the floor.

"But, look here, Koehler, old man," he continued. "That can't be done. The Associated Fruit is a German line, and you can't transfer it to American registry as easily as that, I think."

He waited. The tap-tapping of Palmer's cane had ceased. Dawson knew that he was listening with ears cocked. He laughed merrily.

"I thought an end had been put to that when they sent Lamar up and tied the can to Colonel Washburn. I've got to hand it to you, boys, for speed. You've made the slickest deal I've ever heard of."

He waited a moment. There was no sound from the outer office. He knew Palmer was as taut as the stays of a ship.

"I did," he continued. "I looked around yesterday and found there was a ream of paper on the market. I'm not going to wait until to-morrow. I'm going out right now to jump into it with both feet." He counted ten seconds silently.

"It's awfully good of you to let me in on this, Koehler," he ended warmly. "Why, that little favor to you was worth only a trifle. This is a magnificent return for it. Good-by, then, old man. Thanks again. Don't forget you lunch with me to-morrow."

He hung up the receiver with a click.

"Miss Wister," he said. "I'm going over to Cranston & Towle's. I'll be back in half an hour." He thought he heard the quick rustle of paper.

He opened the door quickly and walked out. Palmer was sitting in a chair drowsily, a newspaper clutched in his hand. He looked vacantly at Dawson, yawned slightly, and jumped up with a laugh.

"By Jove!" he said. "I'm afraid I was nearly asleep. When I came in, your clerk told me you were busy. I sat down to read an editorial, and the darned thing nearly made me unconscious."

"Come in," Dawson said. He led the way into his office, drew forward a chair for Palmer, and sat down. He fumbled for some notes in the letter basket.

"I'm afraid, old man," he said, "that I'll have to disappoint you again. I can't go in on your plantation deal for a couple of weeks, and by then it will be too late. To tell you the truth, I've just been let in on something that happens only once in a century. And I'm plunging into it with every cent."

"It must be pretty good," Palmer said, with an accent of curiosity in his voice.

"Good?" Dawson laughed. "In a few weeks I'll buy Cuba from you. I'm out to put a couple of new figures in arithmetic that haven't been there before."

"I'm awfully glad, Dawson." Palmer rose. "Well, if we can't do business, I'll have to be off. I've got a couple of important engagements. I'll see you on Friday night."

"On Friday night?" Dawson queried.

"Yes. I'm dining with the Nelsons that night. Aren't you?"

"Yes, I'll be there."

On Friday night, Dawson laughed to himself, one thousand poor fools—college men, society matrons, young naval officers, unfortunate bishops, all of whom Palmer had some time or other enticed into his financial nets—would be rejoicing with an exceedingly great joy. Vengeance would have fallen on the stool pigeon with the force of a thunderbolt. He only wished that the news of it could be spread broadcast that the poor victims of the crook's operations could see the beast caught in his own net and speared mercilessly. He felt a little like an executioner who is ridding the earth of a foul criminal.

"Well, I'll see you then. Good-by," and Palmer was off like a flash.

"I'll be there on Friday night," Dawson mused. "But I don't think you will." He heard a rustle behind him.

The little secretary was standing up, her eyes dancing with excitement, her hands clasped. A laugh broke from her lips in little choking ripples.

"It was corking," she nearly sobbed with delight. "It was beautiful. And it's working. I know it, it's working."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Friday arrived—a cold gray morning with a fine floating drizzle. There was a moist, dank smell to the air. Below on Broad Street the fog gave the passers-by the appearance of giants. The gray mist floated past the window like ravels of cloud. Dawson, in his office, felt as if he were in a safe citadel and that outside a battle was raging. It was eleven o'clock on Friday morning, and he sat patiently waiting for something.

He had not long to wait. The outer door of his office burst open with a rat-

tle. There was the patter of swift footsteps and a grunt of surprise from Prothero. The inner door opened with a crash, and Palmer stood before him; haggard, wild-eyed, his mouth working feverishly in weak, grotesque spasms.

"We are ruined," he shouted. "Ruined! Do you understand? Ruined!"

"Take it easy," Dawson advised. "Take it easy. What's wrong?"

"The bottom has fallen out of Associated Fruit. They were never going under American registry. Two of their ships have been captured and sunk by British cruisers."

"Well, what of that?" Dawson asked.

"Are you mad, man? Are you blind? Don't you see what that means? We are ruined, both ruined."

"My dear Palmer," Dawson said wearily. "I don't know what you're talking about. I wish you'd explain. I'm not ruined, to my knowledge, in any way."

"Didn't you buy a big wedge of Associated Fruit stock on Tuesday?"

"No," Dawson laughed. "I've never bought steamship stock in my life. I've hardly ever heard of Associated Fruit before."

Palmer's eyes were wide open with amazement and dismay. Something of suspicion began dawning in them.

"But I heard you say on Tuesday that you were going to buy heavily. I heard you telephoning thanks to somebody for giving you a tip that the line was to be transferred to American registry."

"But this is absurd, this is ridiculous," Dawson protested. "I never heard of this before. Wait a moment. Miss Wister, you were here on Tuesday all day. Did I telephone to anybody about Associated Fruit stock last Tuesday?"

"You did not," she answered emphatically.

"There you are." Dawson opened his palms widely. "Somebody has been stringing you. Or possibly, you heard this in another office. Yes, it must have been some other place. You remember when you saw me on Tuesday you were in a great hurry to keep some other appointments."

Palmer looked at Dawson morosely. He had gone weak and limp, but suspicion and the dawning of certainty gleamed in his eyes. Dawson wished he could feel pity for him, but the memory of his sneaking, spiderlike operations among unsuspecting friends and the memory of the plot against Dawson's self hardened him like rock.

"It's too bad you're ruined," he said.

Palmer stood up unsteadily. His glance at Dawson became murderous. His mouth contorted into a snarl like a dog's. Dawson got ready to finish him.

"It's too bad that you haven't got something left. You could invest it in this sugar-plantation business, and make another fortune, couldn't you?"

Palmer looked at him a moment. Dawson returned the glance with wide, confiding eyes. The scout wheeled around abruptly.

"Ah, go to the devil!" he snapped, and strode out.

"Oh, by the way, Palmer," Dawson called after him. "Shall I see you at dinner at the Nelsons' to-night?"

But the only answer he got was the crashing rattle of a slammed door.

He called up Braga a few minutes later.

"There's the remains of a dead carrion crow in that yam patch of mine," he telephoned. "Thank you for the cartridge."

CHAPTER XIX.

February had gone, and March had gone, and April was coming in with the flash of sunshine and the glitter of raindrops. Across the Atlantic, Teuton and Saxon and Frank were still

warring, locked in battle along the banks of the Rhine, and the hordes of White Russia were battering against the "German rock," Von Hindenburg. America's ghastly bluff of prosperity had been called. Trading in the Exchange had wabbled feebly and fallen prone. The adversity which was ruining thousands was making a fortune for Dawson.

Business was bettering fast, and was returning to normal again. Cotton, which had fallen as low as five and a half cents, was rising as the mercury rises in a thermometer. It had risen to eight and a half. It would rise to nine. At nine Dawson would sell. For himself he would clean up a small fortune. He would have made a name for himself, too, that would inspire confidence throughout the whole of the cotton world. After the nightmare of poverty and horrors that business had gone through, a new dawn was coming. South America, who, most of all, had profited by the war, was setting up busy cotton mills in Rio and in Buenos Aires and Santiago, and was preparing to handle all that the North could produce. It was to Rio that Dawson would sell the fifteen thousand bales he had.

The Nelsons had come to Atlantic City for a few days, and Dawson had come with them. He had never felt the same toward Vashti Nelson since the night she had so forcefully brought home to him her philosophy of success; he had been irritated time and time again by a thousand little occasions when her extravagance, lack of understanding, and absence of sympathy with his ideals had been shown. But it had never occurred to him to break off the engagement. Even if it had, he felt too great a sense of loyalty to make any move in that direction.

He was lounging that Tuesday morning, reading a New York paper, when she suddenly appeared before him in trim tweeds.

"What are you going to do to-day, Brad?" she asked. "Have you to go to town?"

"No," he answered. "I needn't go up to-day. Is there anything particular you've got in view?"

"I thought, perhaps," she said, "that you might take your car and we'd spend the whole day in the country. Would you like to?"

He got out the little roadster that the indomitable salesman had forced on him over the telephone, and they slid off through the broad, clean streets into the green country. They passed along wide, white stretches of road that rolled like a billiard table, and climbed up rugged hills that seemed to rear like a balking horse, and flashed down inclines like the chute of a mill. They purled along beneath poplars that were breaking into leaf, and fields that were turning to the green of emeralds. They talked about the future and their prospects, and Vashti Nelson mentioned a date within two months that would suit her to be married, chose a neighborhood in which to live, and decided that neither paintings of fruit, of dead deer, or of fishes on platters should adorn their dining room.

It was nearing two o'clock when they drove into the yard of a little country inn, and demanded in hungry tones as much lunch as could be got together in the least possible time. The landlady, a buxom German woman of forty, busied herself about their table.

"Oh, my!" she sighed. "This war's terrible!"

Dawson looked up at her with a quick smile. Her serious face and shaking head registered sincere feeling and a sort of terror.

"It was bad enough," she continued, "without South America getting into it."

"I don't think you need worry about that," Dawson told her. "South America will keep out of it."

He knew what she was referring to. A week before a British battleship had inadvertently invaded the three-mile water edge of the Argentine Republic. A storm of protest had arisen from the German colony in Buenos Aires. The Argentine government's protest had been passed over lightly in Downing Street as the work of busy malcontents. The occurrence had caused a slight worry on the Exchanges, but had blown over by this time.

"Yes," Dawson repeated. "You may rest at ease about that."

"I think you're wrong," the landlady repeated, in a high-pitched singsong. "I saw in this afternoon's paper that war was expected any minute. Wait. I'll get it for you."

He began to laugh easily, but somehow the laugh stuck in his throat, and little beads of perspiration formed on his forehead. He felt his face grow white. Vashti Nelson looked at him curiously.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "Ha! Ha! Nothing at all."

The landlady shuffled back, looking at the paper laboriously through steel-rimmed glasses.

"Here it is," she announced. "Right on the front page, too. 'Argentine Serves Ultimatum,' and then beneath that——"

Dawson knocked over a chair in his rush; jumped from the dining room into a dark corridor, and bustled along until he found a telephone booth. He plucked the receiver from the instrument and hammered at the hook.

"Broad 1045," he shouted. "Give me Broad 1045."

He seemed in a heavy stupor. Very faintly he heard the acrid voice of central demanding him to put his coin in, and the deep boom that signaled his quarter. And then there was the loud, shrill buzz of the connections, and the "Here's your party" of the operator.

And then, so suddenly that he nearly reeled back from it, he heard a noise that was compounded of fierce, continuous yelling and of pleading shrieks. It suggested to him the sound the sea makes against rocks in a great gale. It seemed to surge and boom and to whistle shrilly, with one great undertone of fury. The sound nearly drove him crazy. It was the clear, unmistakable, frenzied cry of a panic.

"Get me Congers," he shouted. "Congers, Congers, for God's sake, get me Congers!"

No one seemed to pay any attention to him, to listen to him. He shouted again and again:

"I want Congers! Get me Congers!"

Somebody answered something in faint, far-away accents. The roar and thunder of the panic still rang over the wire like the sobbing of a great gale. Dawson could imagine the men struggling about the ring. Their eyes would be bulging; their cheeks white; their voices hoarse. Their foreheads and faces would be glistening with cold perspiration. He put his hand to his forehead, and, when it came away, it was dank and wet.

The door of a booth slammed in the distance, and the angry tones of Congers came over the wire.

"Who's this?" Congers demanded. "What do you want?"

"This is Dawson," he answered. "Tell me, what's wrong there?"

"What's wrong?" Congers laughed horribly. "What's wrong! Why, hell's burst loose. That's all. Cotton's down to five and a half."

Dawson wanted to say something, but the words stuck in his throat.

"Hurry up, man," Congers was shouting. "What do you want? What the devil do you want?"

"I want, I want——" His voice nearly failed. "I've got eighteen thousand bales for October. You'd better get what you can for them for me."

Congers went off into a burst of hysterical laughter.

"Is that all?" he asked. "Is that all? There's a thousand of us here have got cotton for October, and we can't get anything for it. Don't worry. You've burst in good company. Come in to your own funeral——"

He began laughing again, hoarsely, hysterically, like some instrument gone out of tune. Dawson hung up the receiver mechanically and clawed his way numbly out of the booth.

He walked along the hall in a daze, gathered his hat and coat from the stand where they were hanging, walked out into the yard, and climbed into his automobile. He had forgotten his lunch, forgotten Vashti Nelson, forgotten everything but that hell had burst loose on the Cotton Exchange, and that he must get to New York at once.

She clutched his arm suddenly as his finger was on the starter button.

"What's wrong?" she asked, in terror. "What's wrong? You must tell me what it is."

He looked at her dully. For a moment he didn't recognize her.

"Everything's wrong," he answered. "Cotton's gone through. I've got to get to New York at once. Jump in."

"As bad as all that?"

"It's down to five and a half. Jump in. We've got to go."

"Don't mind me. I'll catch a train back. Can you do anything?"

"I don't know," he said vaguely. "I can't think yet. I'll do my best."

"I'll go home to New York. Come up to the house to-night and tell me. And listen, Brad."

"Tell me. Hurry up!"

"Don't be foolish," she directed. "Look out for yourself above all. Don't mind any one else. Promise me you will. Promise."

"All right," he answered shortly, and the car slid off, and left her standing there, tall and troubled.

He skirted a corner and managed by throwing the wheel over to avoid a child by a hair's breadth. He gained the main road and opened the cut-out. The car sprang forward like a panther. Trees, hedges, and fields flashed by him in an indistinct blur of green. The white road rushed to meet him like a white rope being rapidly pulled in. The cut-out thundered like artillery. The idea of ruin, of utter loss, of poverty did not occur to him. It seemed to him that a huge, black mountain was tottering behind him, and preparing to swing over, tumble and bury him beneath its weight. And the mountain was Braga's money, and the money of his Aunt Gordon, and the money of the others who had given it to him in trust. And in spite of the keen edge of the wind that cut like a great knife, he felt himself go hot with shame and embarrassment.

CHAPTER XX.

He swung into his office at four that afternoon, stiff, dazed, his clothes caked with the dust of the Jersey roads, his face and hands black with grime. As he opened the door and walked in Prothero gazed at him with embarrassment, mumbled a good afternoon, and shuffled rapidly off. Dawson guessed quickly he had lost his nerve. Jerry, the office boy, looked white and scared. He brightened up as Dawson entered, expecting him, doubtless, to clear up the whole situation by the mere magic of his presence. In the inner office, through the glass door, he heard, with a quick feeling of surprise, the voice of his secretary telephoning, and then a quick ripple of laughter. He felt suddenly savage.

As he opened the door, he noticed her sitting at his desk, and that, in spite of her laugh, there was a deep furrow between her brows. She looked at him quickly and went on.

"I assure you again, Mr. Watson," she was urging, "that there isn't the slightest cause for worry. To-day's movement was in Mr. Dawson's calculations. He prophesied this two months ago."

She looked up at him quickly, took in the look of bewilderment and stupefaction on his face, and began again:

"I'm afraid he can't speak to you now. He's in conference with several of the big cotton men, and can't get a moment away. I'm afraid he won't have a moment to-morrow even."

Dawson could hear the voice at the other end of the wire buzzing like a wounded hornet. The secretary began again:

"Oh, yes. I can understand how you were startled, but there was really no reason. Not at all. Good-by."

She turned to him with a quick smile.

"Whew!" she whistled. "That's the eighteenth to-day. God forgive me!"

Dawson walked over to the ticker and picked up the tape. "Cotton at five-six-three asked," he read. So Congers had been telling the truth He turned to the secretary.

"Tell me about it," he asked. "Tell me the worst of it."

"You've just read it—'Cotton at five-six-three,' and no one buying. That's the whole story. You're still in."

"Yes, but the margin. How about the margin?"

"I fixed that," she answered. "I've pleaded, threatened, cajoled, and done everything possible and impossible. I told them you were out of town and we couldn't get in touch with you. I said it was ridiculous to think of closing you out. They were shaky, but they agreed to wait over until to-morrow."

He looked at her for a minute, then turned and walked to the window.

"I don't know what to say," he began. "If I had been here I'd have ruined things. You've pulled them through for to-day, anyway. I don't know what to say."

"I've done nothing extraordinary," she said. "Prothero would have done it if I hadn't been here."

He looked down into Broad Street, sweeping five hundred feet below him like a swift river. He felt as if he were tottering on the brink of the gully, certain to go over any moment.

"It's too bad," he said haltingly, "that after all your trouble the old boat will have to go down. I can't put up those margins. I'm awfully sorry, for your sake."

"Leave to-morrow alone until to-morrow," she laughed. He noticed there was a strain in her voice. "You never can tell what will happen overnight. If there's nothing you want me to do, I think I'll go now."

"No. There's nothing," he answered.

He stood still by the window, not daring to turn around. The girl's loyalty, her nerve, her courage, had stirred up feelings in him that he felt must be photographed in his face. He knew that if he turned around he would show them, and he felt he mustn't show them. He heard her rustling into her coat and hat.

"Well, good night," she said, "and put off worrying until to-morrow if you can." He could distinguish the strain she was under in putting the cheerful note into her voice.

"Good night," he returned, "and thanks—ever so much." He kept his gaze on the street below him.

And as the door clicked, he knew that neither of them had said the thing they wanted to say. And he wondered if either of them ever would—and how, and when, and what.

CHAPTER XXI.

He returned and sat down at his desk. The light became dimmer. Prothero and the office boy shoved their heads through the door and bade him good

night shakily. He answered mechanically he knew not what. Three times the telephone rang out, noisy and strident, but he paid no attention to it. He was trying to collect his wits.

And then it came home to him with the suddenness and force of a shell exploding. He was ruined! Braga's money was gone; his aunt was without a stiver; the hundred friends, acquaintances, and men who believed he was going to make their fortunes—their money, too, had been swept into the swirling maelstrom of the panic. There was over two thousand dollars owing to tradesmen who had advanced goods to him in the belief that he was worth a million. To-morrow morning brokers would ring up and demand his margins, and he would be unable to meet them, and the whole ghastly lie would stand revealed.

What would they think of him? What else could they think, he said bitterly, but that he was a scoundrel, a thief, a crook? They would say he had bluffed about Jared Dawson's legacy, had lied deliberately with intent of getting funds to gamble with. They would accuse him of swindling Braga, of playing on the sympathies of the New England spinster to get her modest competence, of betraying his friends, of beating tradespeople. He shook his head wearily.

"It's hard," he said to himself. "It's rottenly hard."

And then there was Vashti Nelson. What would she do? The marriage would be postponed interminably now. Very possibly she would not wait. Very probably she would not. He was surprised to find that this did not weigh with him very much.

He would be rather relieved if she would release him, he thought. He admired her, he knew, and was fond of her in a way. But even if she did marry him, or agree to wait, what would he ever be but a money-grubbing animal, picking up silver coins and gold coins and pieces of paper that she might change them into smug servants, and ostentatious furs, and baubles to make other women envious?

And all he wanted, after to-morrow, was to go away somewhere and to work with his bare hands; to leave this horrible, tragical game of marked cards and drawn faces, and to do something a man might do. He wanted the open air, and to feel his muscles brace as he worked, and to come home tired when the sun went down. He felt he wanted to go to Vashti Nelson, and to tell her to come with him, to build a new life with him. His mouth grew bitter.

"Wouldn't she laugh," he muttered to himself. "She'd say I was crazy."

To-morrow they would all be against him. Braga would laugh, and say he was likable, but a young fool. Dwyer would philosophize to himself over the instability of young men, and the ways of fate. Prothero would be sorry—the old man was fond of him, he knew. Jerry would miss him—the boy was intensely proud of his footballer master. The little secretary would be sorry, he felt, and his heart warmed up suddenly at the memory of her sitting fighting at the telephone. The rest would be after him like a pack of wolves; they would distrain on his smallest asset; they would want to put him in jail.

He rose suddenly and dashed out of the office. To-morrow all would be over. He wanted to be out in the air to-night. He felt like a fox that the dogs have raised in a covert, who knows that the pack will pull him down, and who wants to sense the spring of the turf beneath his pads and to see the stretch of the gorse hills before the end.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was a warm, soft evening, with a heavy tinge of fog. The street lamps shone in a tawny haze at every

corner. Busses moved along mysteriously through a veil of white mist, looking for all the world like some theatrical illusion. Men and women passed by, the microscopic drops of rain on their garments glistening like so many diamonds. Somehow Dawson felt that it was the end of the world, and that after the fog there would come an earthquake, and that after the earthquake the angel would blow thrice lustily on a brazen trumpet and summon to judgment both the quick and the dead.

He had remembered tardily his promise to go and see Vashti Nelson that night and to tell her how it had fared with him during the day. He looked forward to the visit with a feeling of dismay, for he knew that she would blame him bitterly and unfairly, and he thought to himself with a quick touch of resentment that perhaps if she had not been so keen on his accepting the proffered investments, he might not be in the fix he was to-day. And then, finely, quixotically, he put the thought from him as disloyal.

A voice hailed him huskily out of the mist:

"Listen, boss, just a moment."

Dawson saw a tall form swing toward him, and a frank, shamed face look at him keenly through the fog.

"I wonder if you could loan a fellow four bits. I only got into town this morning, and I'll let you have it back as soon as I make a connection."

There was something so different from the usual parasite's whine about the man's voice that it aroused Dawson from his lethargy. It was frank, sincere—the tones of a man talking to a man. Dawson's hand went into his pocket and brought out a dollar.

"If that will help you out," he said, "you're welcome." And he turned to go off again.

The figure caught him by the arm. "Wait a moment. Wait a moment," it said. It produced a notebook and a stub of pencil. "Do me another favor, will you? Write the name and address there. I want to send it back."

"That's all right," Dawson laughed. "Don't worry about that."

The borrower turned on him sharply.

"Say, I'm not panhandling anything. I'm borrowing. Do you get that? I mean it. Write her down there or take the buck back."

Dawson took the notebook and pencil, solemnly wrote his name, and returned them.

"Now you can tell me where there's a subway, and I'll say thanks and good night."

"Two blocks up at Ninety-sixth Street. Turn to your right. I'm going up that way."

"You got some town, boss," the borrower said cheerily. "The first time I've been in it. I come from Mobile, Alabama. Name of Jennings."

"Looking for a job?"

"Yes, sir. Anything going. Real estate's my line, but I'm not particular."

"I should think there'd be a lot more in your line down there than up here," Dawson told him. He was talking to the man to relieve his mind from thinking, thinking, thinking.

"I've had enough of real estate in Mobile," Jennings said with a laugh. "Too much. It was a little real-estate deal in Mobile that sent me up here."

"How's that?" Dawson asked. He wasn't very interested, but he liked to hear the man's voice.

"Oh, there's not much to it," the Alabaman answered. "I was holding down a job with a real-estate firm as a salesman. There was a fellow came down from New York last winter for his health and I sold him a bungalow. He liked it down there, and then somebody told him about the fortunes made growing oranges, and he went kind of mad on the idea. He had a few thousands and he wanted to invest it in that.

The firm got next to his idea and were going to sell him a piece of land that wouldn't grow an eighth-grade grapefruit in a million years, and wanted me to put through the deal. They could have done it. I kicked and they kicked me out. They were putting somebody else on the job, and I got hold of the prospect and wised him to it. And after that Mobile, Alabama, grew too small for me."

"But they do that every day, man," Dawson said. "It's a principle in law. *Caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware."

"I know they do," Jennings replied. "But Little Boy Blue doesn't. It's too much like robbing blind men."

"It looks like that," Dawson agreed.

"I don't know how the rest feel, but I'd rather go hungry than to pull down a pay check for a raw deal like that."

They had reached the corner of Ninety-sixth Street. They stopped.

"No, sir. When a gink can rustle a job loading bananas on a dock, there's no need for him to thieve. Believe me, there's nothing to it."

In the distance Dawson could see the subway kiosk gleam like the entrance to some magical cave. The Alabaman looked at him squarely.

"And there's always this," he added impressively, "that you feel clean." He squared his shoulders, threw his head back, and took in a draft of the spring air. "And, believe me, boss," he clinched, "I'd rather feel clean with a nickel than dirty with a million bones."

And then, with a cheery good night and a word of thanks, he swung down the street through the mist toward the subway; and Dawson, continuing his lugubrious walk toward the Nelson home, found himself weighing the Alabaman and the railroad magnate whose daughter he was to marry, as in a balance. The scale which held the Alabaman, it seemed to him, plunged downward, while the capitalist flashed up like a feather.

CHAPTER XXIII.

She met him in the wide drawing-room. Her father was not there, and the first glimpse he had of her told Dawson that there was something in her mind which she was going to force on him. The fighting gleam that glowed in the eyes of the railroad captain was in hers. He walked forward irresolutely, and looked at her in silence.

"I've heard about it all, Brad," she said, with an attempt to ease it off. "It's rotten. We must have a good talk over this, and see what's to be done. Come and sit down."

They sat together on a low couch. Her arms rested on her knees; she cupped her chin in her hands.

"I suppose there's no hope of pulling through," she said.

"None," he answered firmly. He cleared his throat. "None at all."

"Well," she said, "at any rate, you're no worse off than you were six months ago. You're a great deal better off."

"I don't see that," he answered.

"Yes, you are," she began briskly. "You've the nine thousand your uncle left you; and you've the commissions of the purchases you've made. That comes to something."

"It comes to seventeen thousand dollars."

"You've got that, haven't you?"

"My dear girl," he explained, "that seventeen thousand was put into purchases for myself. That's gone, too."

"Just wait a moment, Brad. How much have you on hand, not invested, of all the money you got?"

"I think I've got nineteen thousand," he answered, "perhaps a little more, perhaps less."

"Good!" Her face brightened up. She leaned back in her corner of the settee. "Now, what are you going to do with that nineteen thousand?"

"I'll just have to give it back to the investors, Vashti, in proportion to their

investments. It's useless to think of it. It wouldn't cover the margins, nor come near it."

"I see," she said. "Now we are to come to the next point. The money that was given to you was given you to buy cotton with."

"Why, yes, of course," he answered. He wondered what she was arriving at. Her cold-black eye covered him like the barrel of a rifle.

"If you had seen a suitable investment a few days ago you would have invested that, wouldn't you?"

"Of course I would," he answered. He was beginning to be irritated by the elaborate introduction and devious lead. "What are you trying to prove, Vashti?" he demanded.

"I'm just trying to show you, Brad," her voice came distinct and cold; her eyes never wavered, "that you've got an opportunity for that investment right now."

He knotted his brows for a moment, puzzling as to what she meant. He shrugged his shoulders in despair.

"I'm sorry, Vashti," he said. "I'm tired to-night, and I can't think well. Tell me what you want me to do."

"I want you to do," she said, "what any other sensible man would do under the circumstances. You want to sell your holdings, don't you?"

"Of course I do. Oh, what's the use of talking about it?" he demanded. "It can't be done."

"It can," she answered. "Sell it to the other investors. Sell it at what it cost you—you've got nineteen thousand dollars investment money left. It's perfectly simple."

She rose, moved over to the center of the room, and busied herself with the shade of a lamp. She pottered among the books for a moment. Dawson went over her advice in his mind. Suddenly he understood. He started up. She wheeled around like a flash.

"Well?" she said.

"Sell to the other investors?" he choked. "Why, Vashti, you're dreaming. It can't be done."

"It can be done," she repeated. Her eyes closed into slits of black light. "I asked father what could be done in a case like this, and he knows."

So that was where the scheme came from—from the thieving, impure brain of the capitalist. Dawson checked up another item on the debit side of the financier's slate.

"When I say it can't be done, Vashti," he returned, "I mean that no decent man could do that kind of thing. It's dishonest. It's unfair."

"Hasn't it been often done?"

"Often," he replied.

"Don't your investors want to speculate—didn't they?"

"They did."

"Well, then, in Heaven's name," she began; her voice rose in an argumentative singsong; her hand went up in a gesture of irritation, "what's wrong about it? It's done every day. These people have gone into the speculation with their eyes open. The few paltry thousands you'd save are nothing to them. But they'd clear you of debts, and grubstake you until things were bettered. Why, any sensible man in the game would do it. Why won't you?"

"I told you, Vashti. Because it's not honest."

"Listen here. You owe a couple of thousand dollars to tradespeople, don't you? You'll be left without a cent. You'll be entirely ruined if you do this."

"I know it."

"And then—another thing—what about me?" Her voice lost the angry inflection and became cold again, and hard. Dawson felt suddenly as if he had received a dash of cold water in the face.

"What am I to do?" she urged.

"I don't know, Vashti," he stammered. "I thought—I hoped——"

"You thought and you hoped that I

would wait for another five or six or ten years, until you had another chance at success. You've got a chance at success still, Brad. Don't throw it away."

He fumbled nervously at the back of the settee, turned, and began pacing up and down the room. Her rich, vibrant voice pursued him.

"What is it, after all, Brad? It's not as if you were stealing——"

"It is, Vashti, just that—stealing."

"That's only the way you look at it. No one else in the business would see it that way. I wouldn't hesitate for a moment. And look, Brad, I can't wait forever for you. Father wouldn't allow it. I couldn't do it myself. It wouldn't be fair."

She paused for a moment. Her voice became soft and caressing:

"And you know, Brad, that I don't have to wait. There's a thousand men in the city would be on their knees to me to-morrow if they knew I were free. But I care for you, Brad, and it's for your own sake, laddie. I don't want to see you broken and broken-hearted. Can't you look at it sensibly?"

And then, with a drop in tone:

"Don't you see what's at stake, Brad? I am. I can't and I won't wait any longer. And another thing: when father dies, I get his money—and my husband gets it, too. And you know how much there is."

She came toward him with arms outstretched. She put both hands on his shoulders.

"I'm going upstairs for ten minutes to see how father is. He's feeling badly this evening. Think over what I've said, Brad. And when I come back tell me, like a sensible boy, that you're going to do the wise thing."

She slipped out with a quick rustle, and left him standing there.

He knew he was left there to think, and, as he turned to the window and looked out at the fog and the orange tint of the lights through it, he felt that the honest viewpoint he had started out with had become obscured and complicated. It wasn't much, nineteen thousand dollars, and he would be delivering the goods for it. How many men in the game would blame him? Worse things were done in Wall Street with every tick of the clock.

And if he didn't do it; if he let things stand as they were and went down to defeat with his principles, what would happen? He would be out of the game forever. People in the Street would refer to him with a laugh and a sneer, or with a hot word of accusation, and there would be no help or pity for him. Another lightweight gone, they would say; it's a wonder he lasted so long.

And if he did pull himself out—what? He could pay his debts, keep his business running, explain to his principals with a sympathetic philosophy, that they had forced the commissions on him, but that it was the way of the world and the way of the Street. He would keep every one's friendship and good will, except those of the plungers who had greedily expected him to make a fortune for them. He would have a respectable margin above his holdings of six months ago. Every one would understand that he had advised the investors against their action, and that they had pressed the money on him. He had the letters to prove it. And every one would marvel at his own adroitness and shrewdness in keeping clear of the catastrophe himself. It could hardly hurt him.

And then there was Vashti Nelson. He had waited and worked three years to marry her, and here she was slipping away from him. He had worried over his lack of feeling toward her during the last six months, over his irritation by her, over the lack of understanding between them. But now, when the break was imminent, he felt he had been

deceiving himself. He felt the same warmth, the same admiration for her that he had on the sunny Connecticut morning he had asked for her hand and she had given it.

Five years from now—ten, perhaps, but not later—the old railroad man would have gone, and Vashti and he would be among the richest couples in America. All the ease, all the power, all that he had tasted since the fateful day the lawyer had put Jared Dawson's will into his hands, would be his to feast of. Wealth, country houses and town houses, jewels, paintings, travel; the power to rank himself with the behemoths of finance; the feeling that he would be a factor in the national equation—all these would be his for an entry of sales in his book, with a date of a few days before.

There was all this—absence of disgrace, continuation of comfortable living, his career saved, Vashti Nelson, and the Nelson millions, all arrayed on one side against what many Wall Street men would tell him was a conscientious scruple, a peccadillo.

And afterward, when he was on his feet again, he could return the money to the investors, and give some perfectly valid excuse. That could easily be done.

He turned and looked out of the window again, into the shapeless, silver fog. It seemed to him suddenly that he was at Ninety-sixth Street, with the lights of the subway glimmering murkily a block away, and the soft, emphatic tones of the Alabama real-estate man striking his ear.

"Believe me, boss," he heard again, "there's nothing to it."

He started back suddenly in surprise. It was as if a voice from the grave was commanding him to abstain from the course he had laid out.

"I'd rather be clean with a nickel," it went on mercilessly, "than be dirty with a million bones."

Scales seemed to drop from his eyes and he was enabled to see clearly again. He came to himself with a start, and a hot flush of shame flooded his cheeks as he realized what he had been about to do. He started back as if an abyss had been yawning before him.

He had been clean until now. He may have been incompetent; he may have been a fool, but he was clean. Whatever he had done fate and circumstances conspiring together had caused. It was not his fault that the panic had occurred; it was not his fault that the money had been invested; it was not his fault that the money had been lost. To-morrow they might call him swindler and crook and thief. But he knew he was neither of these. He was clean.

It would be easy for him to make the entries, to change the dates. It would be easy for him to salve his conscience with the belief that any other man in his place would do it. He would save himself from disgrace, marry Vashti Nelson, and inherit the old man's millions if he did. But would he ever again be able to look an honest man in the face, look at the little stenographer, look at old Prothero, look at the worshiping, red-headed office boy again? His face would become shifty, his eyes shamed. He had seen too often that frightful, quivering face in the Street, the face of a fallen man.

And even if he were married to Vashti, he thought, would everything be all right? Might she not remind him some time that this had happened? He shivered at the thought. And, after all, was there so much to the Nelson millions that a man should lose his self-respect for them?

"No," he said to himself silently.

There was an end to it. To-morrow he would lose out. He would have lost money, friends, career, everything. But he would come out clean. He would come with two hands to work with, a pair of broad shoulders, and a clear

conscience. And if Vashti Nelson wanted to come with him, and help him, why, then, let her come. If she didn't——

She opened the door and walked toward him, calm and smiling. She appeared confident that he would have come to agree with her. Against her throat a great pearl gleamed, which, Dawson thought curiously to himself, would have cleared him up ten times over. He swung around to meet her.

"It's no use, Vashti," he said. "It can't be done."

She stopped suddenly, as if she had been struck in the face. The confident smile went out of her eyes and they glinted like the edge of a knife.

"It can't be done?"

"I won't do it," Dawson answered. "I won't do it because it would be dishonest, dishonorable, and unclean. I wouldn't do it if every cent in the world were to come to me because of it."

"Well, what are you going to do?" she asked, her hands clasped together in tension.

"I don't know precisely what. The only thing left to me to do when I've cleaned up affairs after to-morrow will be to go off somewhere and work at good, hard, grilling work, and to make out in some other line. I don't know if I can do it, but I'll try. I'll go off to Arizona, or Mexico, or somewhere, and make good, if it's in me."

"Have you decided on that finally?" she asked, with a curiously calm note in her voice.

"I have," he answered.

There was a moment's pause. Dawson could hear the clock ticking on the mantel like the blows of a Nasmyth hammer. Vashti kept her rigid pose.

"What about me?" she inquired.

He braced himself.

"Vashti, if you're sincere in saying you care for me, and sincere in saying you have my interests at heart, if you are really in earnest with me, you'll leave everything here; you'll forget about wealth and broking and dancing and come with me and help me make a home and a fortune for us both. We'll get married quietly, and go off together this week, and found a new world for ourselves."

He took a step toward her and held his arms out.

"Will you, Vashti?" he asked.

"Don't be ridiculous, Bradford," she laughed. "Don't be melodramatic."

He winced suddenly as under the lash of a whip. But he didn't draw back.

"Will you wait for me then, until I have a place for you?"

She turned on him suddenly in a white blaze of rage.

"Wait for you? Wait for you?" Her sentences rang out like the crack of a whiplash. "Haven't I told you that I wouldn't? Haven't I waited for you three years? I won't wait one minute longer. If you don't do as I advise you, you shall never see, hear, nor speak to me again."

Dawson's arms fell to his sides limply.

"I'm sorry, Vashti," he said, "but I can't."

"Is that final?" she asked.

"I'm afraid it is," he replied.

"Well, then, good-by. That's final, too."

"Good-by," he bowed. "'I'm sorry." He moved toward the door. He felt her eyes were boring into his back like augers. Suddenly her voice rang, metallic and cold.

"Oh, Bradford," she hailed. He stopped.

"If you are going to Arizona, or Mexico, or somewhere, you will want car fare. Take this, you may need it." Something tinkled along the floor to him. It was the engagement ring he had given her.

He picked it up. A dull red mottled

his face, and his throat swelled with anger.

"Thank you," he said simply, and went out.

As he heard the door of the Nelson home shut to for the last time a sense of surprise seized hold of him, for, in place of feeling heartbroken and bitter and betrayed, it seemed to him as if gyves and manacles had been struck from him, and as if he were walking out of a fetid prison into the kindly air.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Saratoga Kelly leaned morosely on the bar of the Waldorf. His eye roamed gloomingly over the population of upturned glasses, the bronze figures of the bull, the bear, and the boy with the shell; over the two vases of flowers, and the twin cash registers. It rested again on the pale face and white suit of the barkeeper in front of him.

"Look at this insurance business," he intoned bitterly. "A goneph goes to you and bets that you'll live fifty years. And you bet you won't. Or you bet him that you'll break your neck, or your house will be burned down, or that a second-story man will creep your joint and nip the hardware. That's what I call gambling."

The barkeeper, a sad-looking man with the hair thinning about his temples, made as if to move away. Kelly stopped him.

"Do you know what insurance is? It's a temptation to commit suicide, to hiring porch climbers, to breaking up surface cars. That's what I object to. It's immoral."

He scowled fiercely at a picture of a coryphée sitting in a mist of ballet skirt that adorned the wall. He plumbed the depth of his creamy fizz with a practiced glance, and continued:

"Now, horse-racing is a noble sport—the sport of kings. To dope out a winner you've got to have a deep knowledge of anatomy, velocity, and the habits of animals. Whenever I put down a bet, I put it down as a scientific expert backing my opinion. It's a token of good faith. And still they'll pinch me and call me a gambler, and they'll say the insurance gink——"

The barkeeper took his courage in both hands. He broke away.

"I've got to go," he shouted.

"Ah, go to blazes!" Kelly directed him. He took the half-finished fizz, sauntered over to a table, and sat down.

"Why is this town like Greenwood Cemetery?" he demanded noisily.

No one answered.

"Because it's full of dead ones," he chuckled.

The door swung open. A lean, thin young man in a dark suit walked jauntily in. His eyes were black, his jaw was prominent; a broad-brimmed soft hat sat easily on the back of his head. He caught sight of Saratoga and stopped as if in recognition. He smiled cheerily and walked over. Saratoga rose.

"Let me see, let me see," Saratoga shouted. "Louisville, January, 1907. Third race. Went broke on Richard II. You were trying to take away 'Doc' Pete Fletcher's roll, and the Doc left you nothing but the moisture on the palm of your hand——"

"And you lent me fifteen dollars to get back to Mobile."

"Let me see, what's the name?"

"Jennings—John A. Jennings."

"Sit down. Sit down. Boy, a New Orleans and a—two New Orleans."

The waiter slid across the room through the maze of brown tables to the bar. All around conversation rose in a loud drone. An electric fan sent its current across the room with a pur like that of a contented cat. The cashier at the door gazed around him like some benign deity.

"Living at the Waldorf?" Kelly asked.

"No such luck," Jennings laughed. "I'm going to live in a hall bedroom in Brooklyn, I guess."

Kelly looked at him in astonishment.

"Going to live—— Where are you living now?"

"Nowhere. I got into town this morning, had a meal on my last quarter. Borrowed a buck from a man on Riverside Drive. Came downtown to go to Mills No. 3. Picked up a paper in the subway. Saw that Senator Gilmer was staying at the Waldorf. Gilmer's a cousin of mine. Went to him—had dinner—borrowed a hundred. Here I am."

"Gilmer? Gilmer? Who the devil's he?"

"Senator from Virginia."

"I know all about Virginia. You go to an express office and you ask is there a parcel for you. Same as in Kansas." He looked challengingly about the room. "I'm going to give you a bit of advice. Leave this undertakers' colony at once. Go home. This is no place for a live one."

Jennings laughed heartily. Saratoga kept up his vicious tirade.

"What's wrong with them in this town is that they're afraid. They won't put a jitney on the table. Look at that slump in cotton to-day. If there had been a man with the nerve of a tame rabbit there, he'd have kept that market up. He'd have fought the bulls to a standstill and cleared up a fortune. Yes, sir."

Jennings laughed again.

"Don't worry. There's a fortune in that cotton for somebody yet. There'd be a fortune in it for me if I had the money."

The burlesque bluster of Kelly stopped in mid-air. The air of vacancy dropped from him like a mask. His eyes flashed around at Jennings, hard, clear, and gray. His mouth tightened. His figure sank into repose.

"How?" he asked.

Jennings leaned across the table.

"You know those three Hamburg-American boats in New Orleans, loaded with cotton for Bremen? They're going to sail to-morrow, in spite of British protest. The story won't be released until to-morrow afternoon."

"Well?"

"You can buy cotton for a song now. To-morrow it's going up like a balloon, the moment that story breaks."

"Who'd you get this from?"

"From Gilmer."

"On the level?"

"On the dead level."

Kelly leaned back in his armchair. His eyes closed into slits. He lit a bulging cigar and rolled it easily around. Smoke puffed from his mouth as from the funnel of a steam engine.

"I'm game," he announced. He looked at Jennings squarely between the eyes.

"How much would the deal need?"

"I guess about a hundred thousand."

"Where would you come in?"

"You can stake me in the game for five thou."

"You're all right, kid," he nodded. "This is a fifty-fifty deal. You got the dope. I got the roll. This is a poor substitute for the sport of kings, but it'll do. What else would we want?"

"We'll want a square broker, a man with plenty of nerve and plenty of ability."

Kelly's brow corrugated for a moment.

"I've got the man all right," he said. "I don't know him, but I knew his uncle. I don't know if you ever heard of Jared Dawson. No, you're too young to have heard of him. Let me see what the kid's name is—it's Dawson, Bradley, or Bartley, or Bradfield, or something."

Jennings fiddled in his breast pocket.

He took out a well-thumbed notebook and flicked over the pages.

"Is it Bradford Dawson?" he asked.

"That's it, Bradford Dawson."

"His office is at No. 73 Broad Street, isn't it?"

"That's it. No. 73 Broad Street."

"He'll do. He's all right."

The plunger gazed at Jennings with a look of amazement.

"How do you know he's all right? Do you know him?"

The Southerner laughed his soft, drawling, whimsical laugh.

"I can hardly say I know him intimately," he chuckled, "but I asked him for the loan of four bits and he lent me a dollar. So I guess he's all right, all right."

CHAPTER XXV.

Dawson marched straight through his office the next morning to his desk, sat down, took the picture of Vashti Nelson, in its silver frame, in his hand, and placed it in the farthest recess of the lowest drawer. He heard a quick gasp. Joan Wister had turned around from her typewriting desk and was gazing at him with her hands clasped to her breast.

"Is there anything wrong?"

"No," he smiled, "there's nothing wrong. On the contrary, everything's as it should be—except the price of cotton."

She looked at him searchingly a moment and turned to her typewriter. Dawson flashed carelessly through his mail. There was little use in being exact this morning, he felt. In an hour his business career would be finished. He would be bankrupt. In spite of the prospect he felt a great sense of peace. The break with Vashti Nelson had freed him from rules and complications, and the necessity of getting money by hook or by crook. He would come out of the crash bankrupt, but a clean man.

He would miss the game, he knew; he would miss the struggle, the pitting of brain and will and strength that the game required, but there were other games in which a man might take a hand, so he would not be the loser there. He would miss Prothero, and his dry, grandfatherly, but inexpressibly loyal presence, and he would miss the impish face of Jerry. And he would miss Joan Wister at her typewriter. To-morrow or, perhaps, the next day, would be the last day he would see her, and he had seen her every day except Sundays and holidays for two years. The thought gave him a quick tug at the heartstrings. It was as if one of his hands, whose existence he took for granted, was about to be amputated.

Well, it was no use crying over spilled milk. At any moment the brokers from whom he had bought would call up and ask him to cover his margin. He couldn't. So naturally he would go out.

At nine-thirty the telephone rang.

"This is Walbrooke & Perry, Mr. Dawson. Your margins on the October deal with us are gone. I'm afraid we'll have to ask you for a check to cover them this morning."

He gazed blankly at the metal instrument. He could hardly frame the words that he was out, and they'd have to sell him. Then suddenly, with the force of a shock, it occurred to him that there might be a fighting chance yet. By some miracle or another cotton might get back to normal with the opening of Change. The morning's black headline, "British Minister Awaits Passports," leaped into his vision to kill hope, but the hope remained. He would take a fighting chance.

"Of course I'll send you around the check this morning. Too bad you couldn't get hold of me yesterday. But—— Oh, by the way!"

"Yes, Mr. Dawson?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to wait until

ten or half past ten o'clock. I'm getting some scrip out of safe deposit and I'll have to bring it around to the bank."

He held his breath in anxiety. If they thought for a moment that he was sparring for time, they would have no mercy on him. They would administer the finishing blow to him then and there.

"You know, Mr. Dawson, we've waited all yesterday. And we expected it the first thing this morning. We're afraid we'll have to have it immediately."

His hands clutched the stem and the receiver of the instrument until he feared they would break under the pressure. He pulled himself together with an immense effort.

"Of course," he jeered, "if you're as badly hit as all that, I can let you have it in fifteen minutes. But if it isn't a matter of your immediate failure——"

The voice of the agent snapped hotly over the wire:

"It's not a question of that at all. Half past ten will do very well."

"All right," Dawson replied. "I'll be around by then myself."

He put the receiver on its hook again. It was a thousand-to-one chance and he had won. Walbrooke & Perry were his biggest creditors. The others, he felt, could be put off for an hour, under some excuse or another. In the meanwhile the miracle might occur.

"Can you do it?" the secretary asked.

"I can't."

They looked at each other gloomily for a minute. They seemed to have forgotten that they were employer and employee. They were partners playing a losing hand.

"What's to be done?" she asked again.

"I don't know," he said hopelessly. "There's just one chance in a million that a miracle will happen and cotton go back to normal on opening. That's what I'm looking for time for."

"Wouldn't Don Braga help out?"

"Braga's out of town."

"Your aunt?"

"Not at all. She wouldn't take another chance in the world on it. And even if she would, she's entirely outside of reach."

"I've got it!" she said suddenly. "I've got it!"

He smiled patiently at her. Her eyes were flashing, her cheeks flushed, her mouth open. She stood up in her excitement.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Ask your uncle's lawyer, Mr. Dwyer, to help."

"My dear girl," Dawson answered slowly, "thanks for thinking about it, but it's out of the question. I doubt if Dwyer has any money, and secondly, if he has I doubt if he'd lend it."

"But he asked you to call on him if you were in trouble of any kind," she urged.

"That's all right for advice. We don't want advice. We want money."

"But try—try—try!" she pleaded.

"And even if he put up the money I couldn't accept it. I've been losing other people's money all along. That's the trouble. No. I'm sorry. I'll try this last chance. And then, if it fails, we must take our medicine. Thanks, though, for thinking about it for me. If everybody won in the game there would be no sport. We must lose now and then. Don't worry. It won't kill us."

The telephone rang again. It was Bliss, the grizzled broker, with whom Dawson had made his first foray into the buying end.

"I'd like a check to cover those margins, Mr. Dawson," he began jauntily. He broke down piteously. "For God's sake, let me have it at once."

"I'll be over at half past ten to settle with you, Bliss," Dawson answered. He couldn't find it in him to lie about a check this time.

"Can't you make it before then?" Bliss pleaded. "I need it at once!"

Dawson felt he should make an end of it now. It wasn't fair to keep this poor devil waiting and believing that the check was there. But there was still the faint chance, he thought, that he might win out. He was like a drowning man clutching at a straw. It was so many friends and so much money against one broker. He steeled himself quickly.

"You'll be settled with at half past ten," he said harshly. "You've got to wait till then. Good-by!"

He looked up from his desk. Joan Wister had left the room, and it irritated him that she was not there. He felt she should stick by her post every moment until the crash came. He paced about, reread his mail, and waited. She entered quickly, panting as if she had been running, and began nervously walking around the room. A spasm of feeling took Dawson about the throat.

"Look here, girl," he said to her. "Take it easy. Don't get nervous. It's all in the day's work. It'll be over very quickly—and you'll get a hanged-sight finer job than you've ever had here."

"I'm not thinking about a job," she said nervously. "I'm not looking for a job. I don't think I'll ever take a job again." And she looked out of the window into the street below, and began cracking her fingers impatiently.

The telephone rang again. Another broker wanted his margins covered. Dawson put him off dexterously. And then, with a sob and chuckle, the ticker began spinning out the tape.

Quotations for April, August, and December were typed out in neat, violet capitals as the first call was made. There was a few seconds pause. Then quotations for May and July and September—desperate, tragic quotations. Dawson's heart gave a jump. "October," he read, "five-twenty-five asked." Good heavens! Couldn't they have asked six, at least? The ticker was silent for a few moments, then it began chattering again. "No takers," it spelled. And then, like a hideous, horrible joke, he read: "Four-seventy-five bid."

He dropped the tape and walked over to the telephone. There was no use waiting any longer. Better get it over and have done with it. He snapped the receiver up.

"Broad 9100," he said. As he waited he noticed the little secretary looking at him with blanched face. The outer door of the office creaked as some one opened it.

"Walbrooke & Perry?" he asked. "Give me Mr. Perry. Is that you, Perry? This is Dawson——"

The inner door opened, and Dwyer, hook-nosed, keen-eyed, and bent, walked in. Behind him came a broad figure in sporting tweeds, with a face tanned to the color of leather and a smile that looked like a natural feature. And behind this figure came a lean, tall young man, with a prominent jawbone and black eyes. Dawson raised his eyebrows and smiled in greeting.

"Tell your friend you will call him up again in a few minutes," Dwyer rapped out. "This business can't wait a second."

Dawson heard Perry curse disgustedly at the end of the wire. He hung the receiver up with a click.

"This is Peter F. Kelly," Dwyer introduced, "a friend of your uncle's for many——"

"Saratoga Kelly," the figure in tweeds broke in.

"And this is Mr. Jennings——"

"We've met before, Mr. Dawson," Jennings smiled. "I borrowed a dollar from you last night uptown."

"These gentlemen," Dwyer went on, "have got some important information on the cotton situation, and wish to take advantage of it by bearing the market. They want a broker to handle

their purchases. So they've come to you."

"Knew your uncle very intimately, Mr. Dawson," Kelly interposed. "One of his very good friends."

"Well, we'll all meet afterward and talk about that," said Dwyer. "In the meanwhile, let's get down to business. Every minute's valuable."

"I'm sorry," Dawson began. "I can't handle this deal for you. I'll give you the names of a couple of good reliable people who'll fix it for you."

"Can't handle it! What do you mean?" Dwyer's eyes narrowed and he crouched like a boxer.

"I suppose you may as well know now as know later. There's a bunch nipped in the panic, and I'm one of them. I was calling up to notify the brokers I couldn't cover my margins when you came in."

"You haven't done it yet?" Kelly demanded.

"No," Dawson smiled. "You interrupted me."

The betting man drew a sigh of relief.

"That's a bad habit of yours, young fellow," he said. "Cut it out. You'll scare some one to death one of these days." He put his hand into his vest pocket and produced a capacious wallet. "Give the race, horse, name, and amount. How much's the ante?"

"It's awfully good of you," Dawson returned. "It's very decent of you, but I can't do that."

The hearty accents of Kelly turned into a roar like a bull:

"You can't do what? What do you mean, you can't do it?"

"I can't take any more loans, or any more help," Dawson answered firmly. "We're going out decently now. I've been going on too long on other people's money. The game's over for me."

Dwyer took a step forward.

"You're going to do exactly what I tell you. You're going to let Saratoga help you out here. Neither Saratoga or I are fools. We know what we're doing."

"That's the office, judge!" Saratoga rang in. "That's the line of gaff to hand him! Crowd him! Crowd him!"

"This mess you're in now is the fault of your uncle and myself. And we've all been too good friends of your uncle's to let you stay there."

"It's nobody's fault but my own." Dawson shook his head. "We've been bluffing along here——"

"And you'll bluff along some more," Kelly broke in. "And I'm here with the chips to stake it. You keep your bluff up. I know all the cards out. Hi, you, Mobile, give him the office!"

The Alabaman stepped forward.

"We've got next to a little piece of information, Mr. Dawson, that will give you a line on the business. The *Lesbia* and the *Thrace* and *Xantippe* are to sail for Germany in spite of the protest."

Dawson went taut, like a steel wire.

"Where did you get that?" he demanded.

"From Washington."

"From whom there?"

"From Senator Gilmer."

"Gilmer, of Virginia?"

"Yes, sir. He's my cousin. It was decided to let them sail last Tuesday morning. The story will be out some time to-day."

"The best thing you can do, Kelly," Dwyer broke in, "is to turn that hundred and fifty thousand over to him, and let him pay up on the margins and use the rest to buy with. I'll untangle the thing afterward. Where's that certified check?"

"It's impossible," Dawson began. "I can't permit you——"

"You permit us nothing. I got you into this mess and I'm going to see that you get out of it. Telephone these broker people that you're sending them a check by special messenger. Hand

over that check, Saratoga. Indorse this. Now, we'll send this young lady over to deposit it. Go on and telephone. You promised to ring that man up in ten minutes."

"But look here, sir," Dawson stammered, "I can't let you lose——"

"Lose nothing!" Saratoga roared. "Lose blazes! Keep your hair on and your cards low and we'll bust this cotton game wide open. Sharpen your teeth and rip skin and hair."

"But these people know nothing——"

"I know more about the cotton game than you could hope to learn in fifty years, young man," Dwyer answered dryly. "Your uncle and I together played every stock and produce game in America and made money on it. Telephone about that check now."

Dawson looked at the old lawyer for a moment. He rang up Perry on the phone.

"I'm sending over that check by messenger, Perry," he said.

The lawyer picked up Kelly's check and handed it over to him.

"That's right. And now, Miss—ah, Miss Wister, thank you—you will put on your hat and coat and take this check to the bank. Indorse it, Mr. Dawson, and sign this receipt please. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Your margins run to fifty, I think, and you will begin this little market operation with the rest. Take your check book, write out the checks, please, and —— Boy! Boy!"

Dawson filled out the margin checks obediently. He felt like a pupil obeying the strict voice of his master. He saw Joan Wister flit out of the room quickly, a smile on her lips and moisture in her eyes. He saw Kelly lounge about the room, his tweed hat on the side of his head, his cane swishing gayly in the air about him. He took a playful cut at the office boy, and nodded jauntily to Prothero. The Alabaman beamed on everything with his slow, placid smile.

"And now, young man," the old lawyer directed, "you will act for Mr. Kelly and Mr. Jennings on the Change. You will buy as much as you can below six, and try to pyramid the price up. If you are careful you can push it up two points. If you can do that you've saved the situation for the whole cotton market. Will you try it?"

"I don't know what to say," Dawson stammered. "I was going to throw it all up when you came along, and I'm afraid. There's too much risk."

"There's no risk. All you want is strength and nerve."

"I don't think I've got those now."

"You've got the chance of your life. If you've got any of Jared's fighting blood in you, you'll tackle it. We can talk about your nerve afterward."

Dawson wanted to refuse; to explain that he would have nothing more to do with the game; that he was incompetent and inexperienced. The name of Jared Dawson acted on him as a bugle acts on a soldier. He was no longer an obscure broker, plotting for money to live. He was the nephew and heir of the soldier of finance who had volunteered for a hundred forlorn hopes and won them. The battle was on, and his place was there. He turned to the trio awaiting his decision—to the hawklike Dwyer, to the bluff, tanned, friendly face of the sporting man, to the Southerner's understanding eyes.

"I'll do it!" he said.

And he swung out of the office toward the Exchange.

CHAPTER XXVI.

He passed down William Street with a light, swinging step that nearly broke into a run at times, so eager was he to arrive at the ring of the Exchange. He felt somehow like a soldier going into battle, with the patter and clatter

of foot and horse, and the rumble of gun limbers spurring him on. People turned and watched him as he sped by. The street swung around to the left like a boat turning, and before him he saw the prows of the Exchange, the Seligman Building, and Delmonico's rear into the air, with their suggestion of eternal imminent collision. At the corner a crowd swayed like a spot of dark liquid on the ground. He charged into it as if on the football field. Their hoarse conversation, their disputes, their loud-voiced opinions roared in his ears like the fall of a cataract.

He fought his way through them and up the Exchange steps. It seemed to him as he went along that in the building somewhere were dens of caged animals that grumbled and roared threateningly, and squealed and shrieked in thin, high-pitched intonation. One voice above the others arose in a steady, vibrant clamor. He could nearly distinguish the words.

As he pushed his way up the short stairs he noticed that the hangers-on were looking at him curiously. He heard a voice whisper:

"See that fellow in the gray suit and soft hat? That's young Dawson, the nephew of Jared Dawson."

"He's going to get his, too, I guess," another whisper broke in.

"You bet. He's nothing like the old man. A panic used to be meat for Jared. He'd eat 'em raw. The young fellow's no good. If Jared were here now——"

He broke through and passed the wicket at the door. The roaring became more intense. Inside he could see forms running to and fro, as if on life-and-death business. Others were wandering around aimlessly, as if they had lost all sense of direction and control, like ships going before the wind with no steersman at the wheel. Others stood erect and blanched, with tragedy speaking from their faces. Only the grim gateman was unmoved. Panics were no more to him than eclipses of the moon. He had seen too many of them.

As Dawson walked into the room, a sense of confusion struck him, as if he were gazing at a house turned upside down. Around the ring the massed brokers looked like a vast swarm of black rats in the hold of a ship, or a horde of flies settling on a piece of meat. They swayed and reeled to right and left, as two struggling men might. Their faces were livid and dank; their hair in disorder; their clothes half torn from them; their eyes starting from their heads; their lips parched and white, and through them absurd noises coming—vague, unintelligible, inhuman noises. Through the door of the Exchange he could hear the telegraph instruments pur faintly, and the telephones jangle like far-away music. The floor was covered with scraps of paper, news sheets, ticker ribbons, leaves from pads, all torn minutely by nervous, faltering hands. In the gallery the blackboard showed with huge, sprawled numbers.

Through the roar and drone Dawson heard a voice whisper faintly near him:

"I've got one hundred and twenty bales for October—one hundred and twenty bales."

The whisper rose to a shout in a wild, hysterical crescendo and then died down again. It was repeated again and again like a prayer:

"I've got one hundred and twenty bales for October—one hundred and twenty bales!" And then again the shriek as of a man dying in agony.

Dawson looked around. It was Collins, a little fat man who had gone into business for himself lately. His usually red face was gray and his eyes stared glassily at nothing. He stood rigid as with catalepsy. There was something horribly tragic in the tubby man suddenly struck with ruin.

"I've got one hundred and twenty bales for October—one hundred and twenty bales!"

"I'll let you out on those," Dawson said.

Collins looked at him stupidly.

"I've got one hundred and twenty bales October," he repeated. He didn't seem to understand.

"I'll buy them," Dawson told him.

The fat man's under lip shook. A sort of haze came into his eyes.

"Don't joke," he rebuked weakly. His shoulders heaved. "Don't joke. It's not fair."

"I'm not joking!" Dawson nearly shouted. "I'm buying. Give me that pad."

He looked at the blackboard and scrawled: "Sold to Dawson—five-eighteen." He handed it back.

"Check at the close of Change," he said, and he turned away in embarrassment. Tears were running down the little broker's face and sobs were bursting through his lips like bubbles.

Dawson passed along to the edge of the brokers about the ring. There was no chance of his getting through to the railings. The serried bodies encompassed it with a living rampart of bone and sinew. He could distinguish the hoarse cries of the brokers with difficulty, as if he were translating them from another language.

"October at five-eighteen, at eighteen, at eighteen, 'teen, 'teen!"

"I've got a thousand bales!"

"I've five hundred!"

"I've fifty!"

Others contented themselves with opening their mouths and howling wildly at the tops of their voices with no articulate words. The pæan began again:

"October at eighteen, at eighteen, eighty bales October!"

"One hundred October, eighteen!"

Dawson drew a long breath. He was about to plunge in now. He found himself mumbling a prayer. Again the pæan rose to its full height and began descending.

"Forty bales October! Forty bales October! Forty bales October!" he heard shouted in a loud, rumbling voice like a van rattling over a road. He raised his hand.

"I'll take that forty!" he shouted.

"Who'll take it?"

"Dawson!"

The shouting stopped for a moment. The ring had heard the sale and the name, and were curious. The voices broke out again in a volley of appeals:

"Thirty-seven at eighteen!"

"They're mine!" Dawson answered.

"Seventy-five at eighteen!"

"Seventy-five goes!" he hailed.

"One forty October eighteen!"

"I'll buy," he laughed.

A hand plucked him gently by the sleeve. He looked around him and into the white, thin face of Boyden. Boyden had been ill all winter and had been back only a week. The cheek bones showed like knobs on his face and there were great, dark circles about his eyes. He was broke, every one knew, and there was nothing to bring in money on the Change now.

"I've got ninety bales," he said. His hand still fumbled at Dawson's sleeve. "Will you buy them?"

"Of course I will, old man," Dawson answered cheerily. "Got anything else?"

"Nothing else," he said. Dawson saw the agony and suspense go out of his eyes. "I say," he said, as if he were announcing an incredible thing, "I thought I was going to be stuck with those." He laughed. "Thanks."

"Look here! Look here!" the Perkins & Cross man was yelling. "I've got one thousand October. It's going at eighteen! It's going at eighteen!"

"All right!" Dawson yelled in return. "I'll take it!"

He was well to center of the strug-

gling mass now. People were making way for him. The brokers looked haggardly at him, wondering why, in a panic like this, he was buying with an easy, debonair smile, instead of throwing wildly on the market the cotton he was known to hold, and of shouting himself hoarse in an impotent effort to sell it.

"Another thousand October," the Perkins man was offering. "Another thousand at five-eighteen!" He looked toward Dawson.

"Do you want another thousand?"

Dawson hesitated a moment. He wanted to buy in small lots if he could. But the ring was waiting, listening, watching for his verdict.

"Yes, I'll buy!" he hailed.

The cries of the brokers went up again in a fierce surge of thunder. Dawson's buying had put heart and hope into them. They were looking for others who might walk in unexpectedly, as the young broker had done, and give them a chance to unload. Suddenly Dawson saw a red-faced man with a large, black mustache lowering right before him. Dawson recognized him as Oppenheim, who was a heavy buyer for Liverpool. Oppenheim was shouting fiercely and threateningly, seemingly at him. Dawson could not distinguish the words. Suddenly the gust of yelling died down, and he heard:

"What have you got up your sleeve?"

"I?" Dawson asked.

"Yes, you," Oppenheim forced savagely. "What have you got up your sleeve? What do you know?"

"I know nothing particular," Dawson laughed. "I'm just buying because it's cheap."

"You're buying because you've got next to some bit of information. Why don't you let it out? What are you hogging it for?"

"I haven't got any information," Dawson returned smilingly to him. "You're mistaken."

Oppenheim shook his fist.

"I'm not mistaken," he went on hotly. "You're playing the same old game that Jared Dawson played. You've got on to something and you're just picking up cotton for nothing. I know your bunch!"

And he went off, fuming vigorously.

The shouting about the ring had eased off a little. The brokers who stood around Dawson had heard the Liverpool buyer's fierce accusations, and were looking at Dawson with haggard, puzzled eyes. He might know something, they said, and be buying now while the stock was at its lowest ebb. A faint spark of hope lit up their breasts and battled hard to live.

"Two hundred October! Two hundred!" somebody shouted desperately. Dawson noticed Oppenheim watching him like a cat watching a mouse. Dawson raised his pencil.

"They're mine!" he shouted.

"Eighty October at five-fifteen."

He saw a flush of indecision sweep over Oppenheim's face. The Liverpool man looked toward him. He raised his pad carelessly. Oppenheim's voice rang out like the crack of a rifle.

"I'll buy," he shouted. He smiled malevolently at Dawson.

There was a lull for a moment. The telegraph keys rattled like the machinery of a vessel in the trough of the sea. The telephones sobbed intermittently. The brokers looked at each other suspiciously; they looked at Dawson; they looked at Oppenheim; they looked at Morgan, of Morgan & Ryan, as he hung over the ring, his six feet three of gray tweed setting him forth like a Colossus. Suddenly Morgan raised his hand. There was a hush.

"Listen!" he began. "One thousand bales, October"—he paused. His eyes swept the ring. He shot out his hand dramatically toward Dawson—"at six cents."

"At five-twenty-five!" Dawson offered.

"At five-thirty!" Oppenheim capped.

"Listen again!" Morgan shouted. "At six cents! At six cents!"

"At five-thirty-five!" shouted Dawson.

"Five-forty!" Oppenheim snapped.

There was a moment's pause. Morgan's outstretched finger swung around to Dawson like the needle of a compass. "At six cents! At six cents!" he repeated, in his loud, colorless monotone.

"Six cents goes!" Dawson snapped. A volley of cheers rang through the room like the crackle of musketry. The faces of the men about the inclosure grew red with excitement. Their eyes sparkled; color crept into their voices.

"Listen, Dawson. Come over here a moment." A tall, slim, bald-headed man in a gray suit called to him. It was Buck. Buck was a heavy buyer for the New Bedford mills.

"Perhaps we can do something together on this," he began. His little gray eyes looked cunningly at Dawson.

"Do what?" Dawson asked.

"You're doing a little buying, aren't you? Well, I wouldn't mind doing a little myself, if I knew any reason I should."

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Look here. You're not buying just now because you feel like it. You've got some reason."

"Of course I've got a reason. It's cheap!"

"You've got something else. You're not going long on cotton in a panic just because it's cheap. Can't we fix up a little deal together?"

"We don't have to fix up anything together. If you want to buy, suit yourself. If you want to know anything, find it out!" He walked back to the ring.

"Forty-eight bales October at six-thirteen," he heard.

"Bought!" Oppenheim was shouting.

"Sixty-two October at six-fifteen!"

"Mine!" Dawson hailed.

"Eighty October at six-seventeen!"

The thin New Bedford buyer looked at the seller with a half-closed, fighting eye.

"Buck buys!" he drawled calmly.

The ring broke into a frenzy of shouting and gesticulations. Voices rang out hard and blatant, like the rattle of drums, and full and vibrant, like the note of a violoncello, and high-pitched and quivering like a flute. The mob surged and eddied in a quick-heaving mass of writhing muscle and bone. Dawson felt himself being buffeted here and there as by great waves. On the edge of the railing men were bent half over, making absurd, extravagant gestures, delivering quick, nervous blows at nothing. Their arms went out as if preaching. A vast current of life seemed to have been turned loose, and it was running through the mass of brokers like electricity through conductors. The time for second call came. The gong clanged in a brazen ripple. The announcer mounted to the rostrum. No one paid any attention. Words and parts of sentences and sentences detached themselves from the frenzied speech and crystallized in Dawson's eardrums:

"Six-thirty! One thousand at six-thirty!"

The voice of Oppenheim broke in, snarling like a dog:

"Bought!"

"Fifteen bales!"

"Mine! I buy!" It was Buck's high-pitched drawl.

"Eighty at thirty-two!"

And then he heard his own voice, strained, crack, hoarse, as if it belonged to a stranger beside him:

"Bought by Dawson!"

A sudden feeling of tiredness and

strain came over him. His mouth was parched; his eyeballs hot; his knees weak. There was a sensation of nausea at the pit of his stomach, and his lungs were laboring for air. Hot drops of perspiration trickled into his eyes and blinded him. The surging mob swirled around like a huge, dark spot. It appeared to him curious that he could see it all, for he felt that he was somewhere below, supporting the floor and the ring and the struggling men on the broad reach of his shoulders, with Oppenheim and Buck helping him.

"Six-forty-five!" Morgan yelled, in a voice that carried through the din like a foghorn. "At six-forty-five! At six-forty-five!"

"Nine hundred bales! Nine hundred! Nine hundred!"

"They're bought!"

"Thirty October! I'm selling October! Thirty October!"

"I'm buying October! Thirty bought!"

"Two hundred at six-fifty-five."

He heard himself cawing raucously:

"Two hundred to Dawson."

He looked around at the faces about the ringside and recognized them with difficulty. They were distorted and grotesque—mouths open in incredible circles, with the inside of the throat showing; hair matted and tossed; fierce furrows in the cheeks; skin glistening with perspiration. He wondered if he were like them. He recognized Congers and Oppenheim and MacInnes and Johnson as they stood there blanched and trembling with fear written in huge gray letters on their faces. They looked as if they were trying to brace themselves for a catastrophe and could not. A horrible suspicion flashed over Dawson. Could the information of Kelly and Jennings have been wrong? Might not Gilmer have been mistaken? Might not some bulling brokers have spread it that they might the more easily get rid of their cotton. His skin prickled as though a blast of frozen air had struck it. Perspiration flooded out on his forehead and ran into his eyes.

A sort of frenzy gripped him. Right or wrong, information or no information, he would go ahead and fight to put the price up as best he could. This was no time for hesitation, or for drawing back. If he won, he won, if he went down he would go down mortally, irretrievably wounded. He looked about the ring with hot, bloodshot eyes. The clamor began again.

"I'm giving seven. I'm giving seven for October."

Lennon, of Atlanta, was joining the game. His voice rang out like a bugle.

"Forty-five bales here."

"Taken."

"One hundred and ten bales—I've got one hundred and ten."

"Bought by Oppenheim."

"Eighteen of October—eighteen—eighteen."

"Dawson buys," he roared. A sense of elation swept through him for a moment. The price was rising steadily. Now that Lennon and Buck and Lawton were buying, there was little likelihood of a new break. If it could be coaxed back to normal, if only——

The clamor ceased, and burst again like a shell. The dinning sounds in his ears were paining him. He was becoming numb with excitement and effort. He wanted to break away and rest, but he felt that his place was here until the battle was over and won.

"One thousand bales at seven-twenty-five."

"Oppenheim buys."

"One hundred at thirty, at thirty, one hundred!"

"Bought by Lennon."

The shouting dropped into a lull. Dawson looked at his list—he had bought as much as he could. Not another bale could he afford. He heaved a long sigh of relief and thrust his pad

in his pocket. The lull seemed longer than usual.

"Two hundred at thirty," some one shouted. There was no answer. The buyers were jotting up their accounts.

"Two hundred at thirty October," the voice rang out again. The room was silent.

"Two hundred bales. Who wants two hundred bales, two hundred at thirty?"

A note of anxiety crept into the broker's voice. The men around the ring shuffled uneasily. They looked at the buyers stealthily. They looked at each other with a puzzled frown.

"Two hundred at twenty-nine," the broker began shouting, "at twenty-eight—at twenty-seven—at twenty-five——"

Then sound seemed to spring suddenly out of the empty air. Voices began calling prices in agonized, shrieking tones. The bodies about him encompassed Dawson like a steel jacket.

"At twenty-two——" he heard, "at twenty-one—at twenty—at fifteen——"

He felt himself attacked suddenly with a violent flood of nausea and disgust. The bottom was breaking in the market again. In an hour prices would be as low as that morning. He stumbled blindly through the mob and on to the floor. There was the end, the real end, the final end. He felt that to wipe this last loss out he must kill himself. He saw vaguely as through a mist the faces of Braga and his Aunt Gordon, and the broad, bluff face of the Saratoga gambler, and the earnest features of Jennings, rise up like accusing ghosts. He thought vaguely of the revolver in his desk drawer. Around him the ring crashed like thunder. Outside the door of the Exchange, it seemed to him that the crowd was yelling wildly, deliriously. It struck him that the whole world had all suddenly gone mad.

A figure climbed into the rostrum, with a slip of paper in its hand. The gong clanged savagely. Above its roar Dawson could hear the insistent voice of the ring:

"Six-eighty—October at six-eighty—going——"

He saw vaguely, as in a dim brown motion picture, the figure of the announcer plead for a hearing:

"Gentlemen——"

The ring hushed suddenly. Outside the crowd roared like a great sea.

"Dispatch from New Orleans—the steamers *Lesbia, Thrace,* and *Xantippe* crossed the bar at two-thirty to-day, loaded with cotton for Bremen. The government——"

Dawson heard no further. A bell thrilled out, high and clear above the deafening yells. The closing hour on Change had arrived. The day was over; the panic was over; the battle was over, and won.

CHAPTER XXVII.

He sat in his office two hours afterward, tousled, disheveled, a dull pain in his head, and happiness in his heart. Dwyer and Kelly and Jennings had left him, having nearly in the excess of delight wrung the broker's hand into shreds. Braga had been telephoned, his Aunt Gordon wired, and the other investors assured that all was well. In front of him, on the desk, "No War with Argentina" clamored in the *Hornet's* headline. He sat back and laughed happily.

The stenographer walked into the office. She looked at him with hard reproval.

"You promised Mr. Dwyer an hour ago, Mr. Dawson, that you would go home and rest."

"I don't need rest," he objected laughingly. Then something in the droop of her pose struck him, and he looked at her searchingly. There were haggard lines to her face. And there was a dull, weary look about her brown

eyes, and little violet semicircles beneath them.

"Why, heavens!" he nearly shouted. "You're worn out. If any one is to take a rest, you are."

She left him, walked over to the window, and looked down on Broad Street. Through the half-open window the cries of the newsboys shouting "extra" came pipingly, like the voice of a ventriloquist.

"I think I do," she said, "and I think I'll take one. If you don't mind, a long one."

A tremor came into her tones. They sank into a whisper:

"I don't think I'll ever come back."

He had half risen from his chair, and he sank back into it again with an exclamation of dismay. Not come back!

"Not come back! What do you mean?" he asked.

And then, suddenly, he understood. She was going to leave him. In a few days another girl would be sitting at her desk, writing on her typewriter, doing the same dear mechanical things Joan Wister had done for three years. A sense of desecration seized him.

"Do you mean," he asked, "that you're going to leave me?"

There was a moment's pause, and he heard a muffled "Yes" from the window.

A sharp pain seemed to pierce him in the vitals. He remembered the gallant fighting look on her face when he stumbled in on her telephoning to the creditors, and the deep apprehension in her eyes that morning. He remembered the thousand and one little loyalties she had rendered him, and the feeling of desolation yesterday at the thought of not seeing her again.

A sob came from the window, a little restrained sob, but it rang in his ears like the crack of a pistol. He was at her side in an instant. His arm went about her.

"Miss Wister," he said, "Joan Wister, Joan."

And then, suddenly, he knew not how, he had both arms about her, and her head was in the crook of his shoulder. A sense of peace and happiness crept over him like a narcotic. He found himself patting her gently on the shoulder, touching her bronze hair with reverent lips, saying little things, tender, foolish little things.

The blue shadow of a spring evening settled slowly on the street. People began pouring out of the office buildings like bees from hives. He wondered what time Tiffany's closed. And then a grotesque vision came into his head, and would not go out again—the vision of Saratoga Kelly making a speech at a wedding breakfast table.

THE END.

BURNING UP THE WIRES

A WELL-KNOWN New York magazine was getting up for one of its recent issues statements from great diplomats and statesmen on a certain subject. Among others to whom the magazine applied for material was Count Okuma, the eminent Japanese diplomat. Okuma not only gave the statement, but cabled it from Japan, costing the magazine several hundred dollars.

Later, the magazine sent a representative to the San Francisco Exposition, and he developed a habit of firing in telegrams to the editor every morning at a daily cost of five dollars.

At last the editor lost patience, and sent the representative in Frisco this comprehensive bulletin:

"Lay off of this Okuma stuff."

The Shadow of Granite Ridge

By Vingie E. Roe

Author of "When the Red Hills Threaten," Etc.

Under the title "The Shadow of Granite Ridge" we published three stories by Vingie E. Roe narrating the adventures of a girl who is sent to the wilderness to regain lost health. One of her exploits was the taming of a wild wolf dog. In this story the girl and the dog find new adventures in the Klondike.

IV.—AT KUNMAN'S BEND

WHITE EARS had taken a journey, a very long journey, by land, and then by sea, when he cowered in a dark world that swung and swept from the lower horns of the arctic stars to the upper rim of hell.

He would gladly and frankly have died had it not been that his god inhabited this dim world also, coming daily with soft words and many caresses to salve his sickness, for Lola Lambert went to the Klondike.

And then they had left the tossing ship that had brought them to this far, cold country, and White Ears had never seen snow before.

In his wild green land of the west-coast hills under the shoulder of Granite Ridge, he had seen it, yes, but never such snow as this that covered all things like a blanket and was solid as the earth beneath.

In a land where the dog is the king of beasts—and the lowliest servant also—he met many of his kind, fierce gray huskies and dogs from Siberia, all of which served masters of one kind or another for one reason and another.

Wild savages they were, all of them, cold-eyed and with hair-trigger tempers, and they eyed him askance where they lay in their harnesses before the door of the Arkwright House, at Devereaux Point.

Devereaux Point lay six days from the Seven Flats gold fields, and three weeks from the town below where the river steamers stopped, and all the world went by its doors that year.

But no matter how the savages of these dog teams looked at him, none had ventured to lure him into a fight, for his formidable size, even in a land where many dogs were monsters, was a strong deterrent. He also lay before the door of the Arkwright House, with his nose on his paws, and gave back glance for glance with his pale eyes gleaming in their narrow slits, and he wondered much of this strange new kin.

He was an anomaly, a never-ceasing puzzle to the north-bred dogs of that hard country, for he bore, set in the gray of his rough wolf coat, the badge of an alien service, the broad white collie collar got from his renegade father who had deserted from a sheep camp in the California Trinities.

That White Ears had inherited beyond that weakling of a faithful line, Lola Lambert knew, who had brought him to her out of the Wilderness by the alchemy of love.

And that he was a wonderful dog many another knew of the motley stream that flowed by Devereaux Point to the Seven Flats above. Many a hand went out to him in tentative experiment, for the white collar seemed a sign of gentleness forgotten here, where no man touched another's dogs in carelessness. But though he lacked the ferocity of the Malemutes, still none gained a hair's breadth with him, for that same white badge proclaimed him the friend of one master.

"Lola," said Devereaux's wife, some time Elsie Brown, saleslady at the White Front Emporium of San Francisco, and bosom friend of Lola Lambert, stenographer, "aren't you afraid to leave him lying around loose that way? There are men here who'd steal the laces from your shoes, and a dog like that is worth gold up here."

But Lola, tall and muscled like a man from her two years in the lonely west-coast hills, looked at White Ears and laughed.

"I'd like to see any one try to take the Gray Lad," she said proudly. "I'd like to see it. It would be worth watching."

But Lola had not met Le Brun, who came down from above that fall, a little journey of a thousand miles or so, and stopped at Devereaux Point.

Le Brun was a breed, a slim, handsome devil of a man, shapely as a woman, and cold as the polar floes. He was a study in black and brown—hair, eyes, and skin. He had a name over four thousand miles of territory where it takes something to make a name, and it was not good.

He came driving in at dusk one short, bleak day, behind a team of Malemutes that seemed lean to starvation, but had one been able to put his hand upon them he would have found them hard as steel, and fit to the last whisper of desire.

As he whirled up to the beaten, snow-packed yard of the Arkwright House, Le Brun's eyes, those seemingly pupilless eyes between their long lashes, in circling swiftly the whole place, fell upon White Ears sitting gravely on his haunches by the door.

For just one second, as he sat on the sledge, those eyes widened in a stare.

"Oh-h!" he said, under his breath. "*Mon Dieu!* That's a master dog!" And he looked to his own huge leader, panting in his tracks.

"Thumbs down, Kul-luk," he said coolly. "Your day is done. Two inches better at the shoulder—and what amazing depth!"

Le Brun stayed at Devereaux Point that night, but he said no word of White Ears, nor did he give him a glance that could draw attention. But he saw the tall girl from the States take him out a plate of food, and stand by in the still cold air while the dog ate with a deliberate leisure wholly alien. And when he was done, White Ears leaned hard against her, and his pale eyes fixed on hers in a silent adoration that gave the watcher a creepy thrill.

Lola took the long gray head between her palms and looked back, and it was as if they two communed from their very souls.

Le Brun passed on with the changing stream, but in his own mind he had settled a point that changed his destination, his own fate, White Ears' future, and Lola Lambert's visit at Devereaux Point.

He left the common trail at Twin Forks and went east up the frozen tributary to a forsaken spot he knew, where a man might hide forever within reach of his kind.

Here he built a camp and waited the next snow. It took just a month of in-

action, but he waited—for Le Brun was possessed of a brand of patience that was very high test.

He knew when the snow was five days off, and made his preparations accordingly, breaking his camp and mushing back the way he had come, though he kept far from the beaten trail. The last night he camped within striking distance of the Arkwright House, and by dusk the snow was falling finely.

Who shall say that our brothers, the beasts, have not the mythical and magic sixth sense?

All the early hours of that bitter night White Ears, in his kennel, fidgeted like an old maid, rose, and lay down, and rose again, sat on his haunches, and peered out at the dim smother with his pale eyes. His sharp nose quested the dull air, and he shifted on his feet.

And upstairs, snug between Elsie Devereaux's feather beds, Lola slept in unconsciousness of impending evil.

At midnight Le Brun struck.

A whine, wild and luring, brought White Ears in the open to stand like a statue in the whirling smother. A big, light section from a salmon net, flirted and spread with a practiced hand, sailed over him, settled sharply with its rim weights, and with his first instinctive leap—up and high with spread feet—he was neatly caught. Caught, but far from conquered. As Lola had said, the attempt to take the Gray Lad was worth watching.

It was such a struggle as Le Brun had never known, and it passed in silence save for the thumping of the great body on the snow, the breath that whistled in White Ears' throat, and the grunts of the man himself, for the dog did not know the use of his voice in fear—had never cried for succor in his life.

But Le Brun was a craftsman among dogs. Very swiftly he got a strangle hold of cordage around the broad white collar, drew down, listened to the whistling breath raising its note like a humming wire—pulled tighter yet—and presently he drew away to the waiting sledge a huge, inert bundle.

Five hours of heavy snow suavely smoothed out all evidence, and dawn brought a perfect mystery to the Arkwright House.

"Stolen!" said Pete Devereaux. "Stolen, by all that's wonderful! And from under our very noses!"

But Lola, looking at the empty kennel, went first red to the edges of her heavy hair, and then very, very white.

"Very well," she said. "If he's been stolen and not killed—— You don't think he was killed, Pete?"

"Not a bit of it. There isn't a man in Alaska who'd kill a dog like that."

"Then if he's living, I'll get him back, if I have to travel every trail in the Klondike. I'll start on the first clew."

But Devereaux shook his head. "There isn't a dog in the world worth the risk a woman like you would take at that," he said.

But Lola looked him in the eyes, and he knew he might have saved his breath.

"Man," she said gently, "he came to me out of the hills and freedom. He met a panther in the air as it leaped for me. He watched beside my bed while I slept in a cabin sixty miles from humanity, with the door open. He has never failed me. I shall not fail him."

So it was that the great wolf dog of the California coast passed into the hands of that wizard of the trail, Le Brun, the breed.

Judged by what he suffered in the next three months, it would have been better for White Ears had the tossing ship gone down.

Le Brun was a master of dogs as few are in this world, and he set himself to conquer this prince of the breed as only Le Brun could conquer.

But from the very beginning there was that between them which sent the blood hot in his cheeks, and lent a devlish cunning to his hands.

White Ears had never known a man intimately, and he distrusted them all. He had never taken an angry command in life, never received a blow, never known fear of a human.

From the first day of his changed estate his education began, and it bewildered him. Weak and sore from the severe strangulation, he was hitched into the team that night, and dragged through the heavy hours until dawn. He was tied ignominiously to the sledge without a bite while the others snatched at their food.

He was bound in the hateful harness again and dragged until, for very dignity, he ceased his lunges and walked. Le Brun did not beat him, but when he spoke, and the others crouched and leaped under the steel of his voice, he watched White Ears for the effect. And that there was none brought his thin lips back from his teeth in a curl.

"Aho!" he said. "We do not fear, eh? But we'll learn."

And he proceeded to teach the wild, loving heart of the Gray Lad that most demoralizing emotion.

In a month the great gray dog, who had never known let or hindrance, ran in the lead of the savage team as though he had been born in harness.

What methods Le Brun had used only himself and White Ears knew, but there was an unhealed scar under the long jaw that used to fit into the palm of Lola Lambert's hand, and around his loins there was an angry mark, as of a tourniquet. But though he answered and obeyed the steel-cold voice, his obedience differed from that of his mates in that it was without the cringing haste that made them so efficient.

Do what he might, Le Brun could never force this new leader to ignominy, could never set his flanks aquiver with fearful expectancy. And always there was between the two that something which had been there with their first look.

Always White Ears' pale eyes met the man's dark ones full, and always they set a mark between himself and his master which Le Brun had never crossed.

Time after time he had raised a hand to cross it with a murderous blow, and each time the dog had taken a step forward to meet it, ready, waiting, his head low, his white ruff raised, and his eyes like points of light, and each time the hand had dropped.

Le Brun stayed away from the Seven Flats diggings. He ranged far and wide in his restless travel, and everywhere he went he gathered gold, not with pick and shovel in the fire-thawed earth, but with those snug and clever tools, the cards, whose every trick he knew as he knew his own devious mind.

And everywhere he went, the marvelous new leader of his well-known team drew comment and admiration. Le Brun boasted about him with the swagger of the braggart, and made record trips to prove his word—trips that would have killed any other team in the land.

They came near killing White Ears, too, at first, for he was new at labor. But he had not run down his prey on the bowldered slopes three full years for nothing.

He strained through every deadly journey with the hurry of desperation that he might scan the faces at its end for one. If he saw a woman in the far-flung camps they touched, no hand on earth—not even Le Brun's—could have kept him from investigating her. At this the breed always swore under his breath, and it was at these times that he had raised his hand to cross the mark.

But with each new disappointment the look of menace in the dog's eyes

grew and deepened, and he became more and more aloof.

Kul-luk, the old leader, hated him, and was always trying to pick a fight out of him. The others hated him, too, perhaps for the broad white ring around his neck that made him an alien, and they all waited for a chance to kill him together.

Le Brun knew this, and he kept White Ears constantly with him.

The fame of the big dog spread, augmented, perhaps, by the fact of Le Brun's jealous guard, and several marvelous offers were made for him, which the breed rejected contemptuously.

And it was about this time that a rumor began to spread also—a rumor of a woman who had appeared in the places where Le Brun had been, who asked always of him, and, finding him gone, disappeared swiftly. She was a young woman, the word went, tall and handsome, and with a calm and determination that were notable. At first those who told of her grinned. There was many a woman who had reason to want Le Brun, but this must be a more than faithful damsel.

She traveled well heeled, they said, with two first-class teams and a middle-aged Indian and his son, from Devereaux Point.

She was heard of at Salmon Falls, and then at Kutlow's Landing, three hundred miles above. Always she asked of Le Brun, and if he drove an oversized, collie-collared dog; and presently it filtered through the talk that it seemed the dog was first in her eager queries. And with this the grins ceased and men began to ask each other what new deviltry Le Brun had been up to.

The speech was long in coming to Le Brun himself, but when it did, his evil eyes lighted with interest and excitement, and he, too, grinned.

"Voilà!" he said. "A woman chases Le Brun! That is rare. Mostly it is the other way about."

But when he found that this woman asked always of the white-collared dog, the lighted eyes narrowed, and the hands that held the cards tightened upon them just perceptibly.

Thereafter he made heavy journeys, and visited far outlying points.

But gossip flies fast in the lonely lands, and by spring men smiled at Le Brun in a way that made his blood boil, and hinted that he fled from a woman from fear.

That crystallized in speech one bleak, blue day at Kunman's Bend, and a dozen sour doughs laughed in the bad man's face.

"It takes a woman, eh, Le Brun, to put the fear of the Lord into you," said MacDemarra. "And with reason, say I. There must be a strong motive behind such patience and endurance. How long has she been coming, McKendall? When did we first hear of her?"

The old man behind the counter of the store glanced up from his accounts. "Five months they say. And she's covered every track he's made."

The breed raked in a pot from the table before him, having bluffed it out of the rest on a pair of deuces, and spat elaborately at the stove.

"Eh—a woman! Bah!" he said.

But King, from the Little Pan diggings, leaned across the table.

"'Bah' if you wish, Le Brun," he said, "but if you haven't been running from this same determined woman for the last three months anyway, now's your chance to prove it. She's at the camp below to-day. She'll likely make it here to-morrow. You've lingered here a bit too long."

Every eye in the room was on the breed, expecting they knew not what. But this cool devil of a man had done too many shave-skin deeds, carried off too many situations where the ice was paper-thin beneath him, to turn a hair at this. He merely shrugged the shapely

shoulders under his flannel shirt and shuffled the cards.

"How many?" he asked his neighbor, flipped the pasteboards, and smiled.

"I run, m'sieu?" he said. "I think you mistake. I stay yet another week at Kunman's Bend."

But presently his sly black eyes glanced, cornerwise, to where White Ears sat quietly on his haunches, staring at the square of dirty window. The great dog had a peculiar habit of sitting so for hours, passive, motionless, eyes alert, and white-lined ears pricked half forward as if listening for some fine, far-distant sound. And never did he acknowledge his master by meeting his eyes or turning at his voice among the others. When Le Brun wanted him, he spoke to him alone, forcibly, clearly, and White Ears answered in his own dignified time.

All this howling, wind-whipped day the dog had sat so, watching the window, listening, while the roisterers laughed and lost or won at the table covered with dirty, stretched canvas.

The sixth sense that had held him fidgeting on a rock in the moonlight high up in the California hills that long-past night, and had finally sent him down to sniff and pad at the door of Lola Lambert's lost little cabin, now held him waiting in a strange excitement that tensed the muscles in his lean body, caused him to breathe lightly.

Who shall say that he did not feel her coming out of that infinitude of loneliness and heartbreak that had hollowed the faithful eyes in his thin face, taken the flesh from his bones in silent fret?

At any rate, he refused the food that Le Brun offered him at noon, and only shifted behind the roaring stove, while the players left their cards to eat cheese and crackers and canned salmon on the dirty counter.

When they had settled back around the table, he came out again and took up his position where he could watch the high window with its square of gray light. The last big snow of the year came on that night, and the day was desolate to madness.

The hours passed monotonously with jest and oath and noisy sorties to the counter, one end of which served as a bar. The little crowd had grown until it comprised every man at the bend—and then there were barely enough to fill the long room, for the bend had had its fever, recovered, and existed dully without its delirious dreams—for King's words had spread with a hint of possible excitement.

They welcomed anything at Kunman's Bend these days, from a dog fight to a woman's quarrel, since its big days were done.

But the hours passed, and those who went in and out in elaborate offhandedness, to keenly search the distances the minute the door was shut behind them, saw nothing on the trail.

Dusk fell early with the impending storm, and old man McKendall lighted the big gas lamp.

Le Brun had almost cleaned the crowd. There was a heterogeneous heap of wealth before him—gold and silver coins, a few bills, dust in leather pouches, and a little pile of nuggets, duly weighed and valued.

King was game to the last ounce, and he was still betting. So was a long, lean boy from Juneau.

And then, all of a sudden, for no visible reason, White Ears sprang to his full height, stood tensely a minute as if strung to the last bearable tension, listened acutely, held the breath in his quivering sides, and, flinging up his head, gave tongue to a cry that filled the long room with an avalanche of sound.

It was a wild, compelling, savage call, and an old Frenchman sitting by the stove crossed himself swiftly. "That's all wolf!" he whispered.

Twice—three times—the wolf dog put all his heart and his deep lungs into that ringing call to the night and the desolate wastes.

Then, with an oath, Le Brun got up, took him by the collar, led him to the back room, where McKendall kept his stores, and shoved him in among the boxes and barrels.

He slammed the door and resumed his seat, but the old door, swelled and peevish, grumbled and edged back a bit along the uneven floor, so that a crack of light split the darkness in the storeroom.

White Ears, absorbed in his listening, sat tensely down on his haunches again.

At the end of another hour the boy from Juneau was done, and King had just laid his last dollar on the dirty canvas. Le Brun reached out a shapely hand to rake in the pot—small now—but held it poised in air, long fingers spread.

He never took that money. There was the sound of arrival at the door, coming upon them suddenly because of the falling snow, voices, and the rattle of harness.

Every man in the room sat as it caught him for a moment, and every eye flew to the face of Le Brun, for the same thing was in every mind.

Then old man McKendall came out from behind the counter to open the door, but before he could reach it, it swung in with a strong-handed sweep, and she whom they had expected stood there.

The snow was white on her parka, and she was clumsily wrapped in her furs, but her beautiful gray eyes shone in the light like stars. Wisps of her tawny hair hung down along her cheeks where they had been whipped by the wind of the earlier hours, and they saw, as the rumor had said, that she was very handsome.

A moment she stood so, scanning the room. Then she came in and closed the door, and her searching eyes halted on the face of the breed by the table—halted, passed on, flew back, and stayed.

A long moment they faced each other so. Then the woman walked straight up to him.

"You are Le Brun," she said, in a voice of long-held rage. "Where is my white-collared dog?"

The gambler rose, leaning against the table with his arms folded across his breast, the long fingers of each hand playing insolently on the opposite biceps. He shook his head.

"Does madam not mistake?" he said, smiling. "I have only solid grays in my team."

The cheeks of Lola Lambert, reddened by the cold, grew to a dark crimson.

"You are not only a thief," she said, "but a liar as well. I have followed you all over this country, and I know you had him a week ago. *Now dig him up!*"

The devil that lived in Le Brun leaped into his eyes.

"So?" he said. "A woman would force Le Brun, eh? To blazes with you, madam!"

There fell a slight pause, and in it those in the room heard another sound—a choked, passionate voice that sucked and gurgled in a surcharged throat, a body that fumbled and blundered at the storeroom door.

Le Brun heard it, and his dark face whitened with cold fury. Lola Lambert heard it, and, jerking up her whole tired body, laughed.

"Liar!" she cried again. "He's here, and he's mine!"

And, lifting her voice, honey-sweet and luring now, she called to the faithful heart breaking itself behind the thin partition.

"Gray Lad!" she cried. "Gray Lad! Gray Lad!"

A pealing cry answered—a white-

tipped foot fumbled through the crack of the door, a sharp nose followed, and the great dog forged through.

His eyes were fire in the shadows, and he looked filled with murder, so intense was his joy—wild wolf in all seeming.

"Devil!" hissed the breed between his teeth. "Back! Back——"

And with one long, catlike leap he crossed the space between, snatched a hunting knife from his belt, and raised it high to cross the mark at last in deadly earnest. Few had ever beaten Le Brun—never a woman or a dog.

But this time he had misjudged somewhere.

He did not know the history of those two years in the California hills when these two had ranged alone, nor the love that was between them.

Therefore he sprang forward with the knife lifted.

"White Ears!" shrieked Lola. "White Ears!"

At that call the dog, confronted by this man whom he hated, became a devil, indeed. Every hair rose on his body, his eyes contracted, his lips quivered back from his fangs, and the slavers ran.

He dropped in his stride and lifted high in the air as he came for Le Brun, curving his body aside, and shooting his long head forward. The watchers saw the wide jaws take the man's throat fair, heard them snap with the slashing cut of the timber wolf, and saw the red blood spurt as they came free—closed. It was a clean trick that White Ears had done before on many a plunging buck.

Le Brun fell in his tracks, the knife clattering on the littered floor, and in a matter of minutes they covered his face and the place where his throat had been.

But long before that, White Ears had reached sanctuary—had thrown his great body against Lola's knees, and sobbing, she bent to clutch him in her arms, and he could only whimper like a puppy and tremble as all Le Brun's tortures had never made him tremble.

The awful months were wiped out in that moment.

After a while the girl raised her face and looked at the silent crowd.

"Gentlemen," she said, "what do you think? Wasn't it justice? The dog is mine, you see—and it was life against life. You don't condemn him?"

A long breath escaped from a dozen throats, and King spoke.

"It was the high days come back," he said, "when every soul fought for its rights. Your Gray Lad was the better brute. It was more than justice—for we knew Le Brun."

And so presently Lola Lambert went out of the store at Kunman's Bend to the waiting sledges, and with her went the huge gray dog, his lean body leaning hard against her as if he could never part from her again, his pale eyes glowing up at her in the white darkness with a love that was idolatry.

The other stories in this series appeared in the issues of POPULAR dated March 7, March 23, and April 7. Back numbers may be obtained through any news dealer.

A FIGHTER MAKES PEACE

GENERAL HUGH N. SCOTT, chief of staff, United States army, is a great hand at making peace. When the Navaho or Piute Indians jump off the reservation, and begin to shoot things up, General Scott leaves his post in Washington and goes out to pacify the warriors.

He sits around the camp fire, smokes the pipe of peace, and speaks the language of the Indians. He has a record of never having failed on one of these missions of peace.

"High Grading" at Rawhide

(As told by Bill Haywood)

Done into Verse by Cy Tobias

WAY down in the mines at Rawhide,
With powder and pick we bent,
For the gold that men fight and men die for,
And none of us knew content.
Though wages were high,
They were not high enough,
And it's senseless to dig
And turn over the stuff,
To a white-collared, dude,
Metallurgical bluff.

So we started "high grading" at Rawhide,
Or privately entered claim,
For a part of the loot of the bosses,
Stacked cards in the old brace game.
Of course we said nothing
To spineless galoots,
But padded our pockets
And filled up our boots,
And clumped past the tenders
Who handled the chutes.

When we started "high grading" at Rawhide,
We managed to swell our pay,
By sending the ore down the cañon,
And getting a fair assay.
We packed it in boxes
And labeled it "Soap,"
And sent it by stage
Firmly tied with a rope,
And trusted to Collins,
The driver, a Dope.

When we were "high grading" at Rawhide,
Old Tom he would wink and would cough,
And take a big jolt in the arm with a grin,
Climb aboard and go driving off;
And when he returned
With the stuff that will buy,
We dressed up the Missus,
And set up the rye,
And Tom took a slug in the arm,
On the sly.

When we were "high grading" at Rawhide,
Old Tommy was caught with the goods,
"No chance with a Dope under pressure," we said,
And some of us took to the woods.
They locked up poor Tom,
Took away all his "snow,"
But promised the drug
If he freely would show
Who had taken the ore;
And they said he could *go*.

There was no "high grading" at Rawhide,
With Tom going mad in jail,
For the stuff that would cure him of anguish,
The stuff that could never fail;
Tom raved in his cell,
Like a madman at bay,
The drug was their bribe
Every night—every day;
Tom shrieked as he moaned:
"I have *nothing to say!*"

They took Tom away from Rawhide,
For he never told, you bet.
Eight years is a long, hard sentence,
But, God! We will not forget.
How *could* we forget,
Through the night, through the day,
He fought all the demons,
And held them at bay,
Held out to the end—
He had *nothing to say!*

The Smell of Gasoline

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "The Blue Roan of Providence," "To Cancel Half a Line," Etc.

The price of gasoline is outrageous. So was the smell of gasoline to this lover of horses who had built a circle speedway in a town that was started as a jest, for the benefit of people who owned no blooded horses and weren't wild to own any. No use trying to talk automobiles to a man of his stripe. You might as well argue with a carburetor. Just the same the people of his town put one over on the old man who saw red every time autos were mentioned.

AFTER thirty-one years on the board of directors of the Southern California Driving Club the old gentleman has sent in his resignation, and Sid Watrous, of Santa Monica, has been elected to take his place. The board presented dad with a two-hundred-dollar split-second stop watch and a set of resolutions full of bunk about "service to breeders," "incalculable loss to horse-racing," and "the true gentleman's fine sense of sportsmanship," but I notice that the resolutions went into a bureau drawer, while the head of the house carries his new automobile license around in the door pocket of the eight-cylinder Mohawk that Don Lee delivered last week. Out our way horse breeding is as dead as croquet, and everything in the place smells of gasoline.

Maybe it would have come to that sooner or later, anyway, but I brought the old gentleman around. It goes to show a lot about the evolutionary trend of the times and the influence of modernity, and all those things Professor Willis lectures about in Economics III, but what is more important it shows where I get my sporting instincts. Believe me, I've got an ace up my sleeve now when dad begins to talk to me about expenses for my senior year at Stanford.

To start at the beginning I've got to go back about forty years. My father is Hiram Z. Byron, the biggest lemon grower in southern California, and founder of the little town of Byrona, out east of Los Angeles. He came from New York State in 1881, not very long after oranges and lemons had begun to take hold in these parts, and all the money he had he put into a piece of land near Riverside. The wise birds said he'd never take anything off the ground but tax receipts, but dad planted lemons, and in two or three years began to expand and buy more. About the time gentle spring brought me into the family he had three hundred acres in lemons and was counted one of the leading citizens. In that vicinity they count in acres mostly.

The old gentleman says he gets his sporting blood from his English great-grandfather. Maybe so. He had plenty of it, at any rate, and I claim he passed

a lot of it on to me. His hobby was horses. He always kept from three to a dozen well-bred nags around, and for ten years in the nineties actually made money on the big circuit, with Eddie Durfee training and driving for him. Two pole teams of matched horses were the least he could get along with, and of course there were fours for the brake, and a tandem team for horse shows, and plenty of thoroughbreds for the saddle. I never quarreled with his taste in those days, but times change.

The one complaint dad had then, when I was a little shaver, was that there was no first-class speedway in the neighborhood. He talked about it a good deal, and one day, according to the story old man Lyons—the Redlands Lyons, you know—asked him why he didn't lay out a course of his own.

Dad said: "Because I don't want it out here in the country. I want it near a town where other folks will use it and where I will have a chance to show what my stable can do against all comers—gentleman drivers, and over any distance up to five miles."

Lyons, so the story goes, said jokingly: "Why don't you build a town, then, and attach a speedway to it?"

Dad didn't even stop to consider. "By George, sir, I'll do it!" he said, and went out and did.

He had a three-hundred acre piece in the center of the rancho that wasn't planted, and inside of a week he had some surveyors on it from Los Angeles, and they were staking city lots. Around the town they laid out a speedway in an exact circle. Dad hired a real-estate hustler and began to sell lots. The proposition looked good—there wasn't another town near, and the citrus district was growing fast—and the city of Byrona, which was started as a joke, became the biggest money-maker dad owned. In three years it had two thousand people, a high school, a Carnegie library, five churches, a fifteen-thousand-dollar city hall, a packing house, and two streets jammed with business houses. It's been growing steadily ever since, and I don't suppose more than twenty people in the whole burg know that Byrona was started by a jest.

Meantime dad had his speedway. He was disappointed to find that the average man who settled there didn't own blooded horses, and wasn't wild to get one, so that, as far as furnishing him competition for his stable, Byrona was a frost. But the Circle Road was used a good deal on moonlight nights for love-making in livery-stable rigs, and once in a while dad was able to scare up something on the Circle that could go faster than a walk. It was a matter of pride with him to drive on it himself, and regularly every morning he would work out some of his teams, or put one of the fast ones around in a sulky. Once a year he had a house party of horse breeders on the ranch, and they'd hold an informal race meet all to themselves, and Byrona would declare a holiday.

II.

By the time I got into high school most of the other orchardists had automobiles, and it made me pretty sore because dad wouldn't get one. He said that horses were better bred and better trained than they'd ever been in history, and that what was good enough for him was good enough for me. He gave me a little filly that could pace five miles in a shade under fifteen without wetting a hair, but by the time I'd had her six months she was spending most of her time kicking up her heels in the meadow and getting into elegant shape to have fatty degeneration. Tod Wright's father gave him a speedy "four" runabout, and Tod and I hit the long county boulevards on gasoline and left the hay burners for dad and my sister Pats.

I got an allowance when I went to Stanford, and saved enough to buy a small boat the first year. I guess maybe I inherited horse trading from dad—at any rate, I was pretty lucky in swaps, and last year I wished on myself a burned-out Leblanc forty-horse-power 1911 model that Tod and I rebuilt into a speed bus that left everything else in college back in the wake. We stripped her down, put in a new motor, equipped her with everything that was late enough to make her go faster, mounted oversized tires, and painted her a Stanford cardinal, and you may take it from me that she was as busy as a good little bee. We drove down home for the summer vacation, and I let the folks think it was Tod's machine, but Pats knew better, and, just like a girl, she accidentally spilled the beans one day, and then father called me into his office.

"Your automobile, eh?" he said, with that kind of polite way he has that shows you you've been exceeding the speed limit and are up against a new ordinance.

"Yes, sir. I got her out of my allowance money and some trades. It hasn't cost you a cent, sir."

"No," dad said, sort of quiet and dangerous. "No, it hasn't, and it isn't going to. I'm afraid I've been giving you too large an allowance."

"It isn't any bigger than Tod Wright's."

"Quite so. And it isn't any bigger than the national debt, either. It's too big. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't suppose you could keep up that automobile on half your present allowance, could you?"

I might have seen what was coming, but I didn't. I began to have hopes. I said: "Not very well, sir. Tires and repairs and gasoline going up——"

"It's too bad," the old gentleman said, as sad as though he'd lost an aunt. "The price of gasoline is outrageous. So is the smell of gasoline. You go on back to school, and if I hear of your using gasoline for anything but to clean your suit your allowance will be cut to four dollars less than nothing and I'll get you a place in the packing house. That's all. Good day, son."

III.

I wished I was Pats and could cry. "What'll I do with the car?" I asked.

"Nothing at all," dad said. "It'll be locked up in the barn until you come back with your diploma. If you graduate with honors, you can have it. If you don't, I'll have it hauled into Byrona and sold to Ike Masterson for junk. Good day, son."

You might as well argue with a carburetor as with my old man. You'd get just as good results. I went back to college last fall on an allowance so small that Tod used to get out the reading glass the fifth of every month to help me decipher the figure on the check. A fellow named Ralphs from Los Gatos blew in with a new sixty-horse-power Italian car that semester, and snagged my girl. He used to swell around the quad, telling how far his cruiser could beat mine if I'd bring it up, and all that sort of thing. I only wish I could have had a run-in with him. That Leblanc of mine would have left him so far behind—— But what's the use?

Christmas, when I went home, dad took me out behind a new pole team of blacks he was training for high-class carriage work, and we did the Circle Road, which measures two and eight-tenths miles on the pole, in six minutes and twenty-five and two-fifth seconds. The old gentleman was keen on that team, and he kept saying: "Lord, if I only had somebody to go against! They can do six-ten flat in competition!" And as we were driving off, he said, kind of to himself: "The older I get, the faster I like to travel."

That little remark really started me on the big scheme, though I'd thought of it before. I took Tod into Los Angeles with me, and we hunted up Teddy Tetzlaff. We introduced ourselves, and Mr. Tetzlaff treated us like we were regular fellows. When we got through telling him, he said: "It may be just what they're all looking for. I'll come out Saturday in the boat and give your course the once over."

He came, all right, and when he had driven the Circle, he said: "It would have to be paved or macadamized, but if the people here will fly to it they can put Byrona on the map. I'm for the course strong. My guess is that it will take all the world's records for five hundred miles inside of two or three years. If I can do anything, let me know."

Well, I'm not going to take up the time to tell you how we did it. We interested a lot of the town people just by dropping hints. Then Tetzlaff talked about it to a newspaper man, and he didn't let the idea get cold. He came out with a photographer and wrote a long piece about it, and the Byrona folks got to quarreling among themselves as to which of them had suggested the idea first. If you know a small town, you know that there was nothing to it after that. By the next spring the old Circle was all torn up by a contractor and dad was purple in the face telling the folks that they were going to bankrupt the town. When I went home for Easter, it was all he'd talk about, but the Circle was getting its last coat of oil and sand, and the local paper was prophesying that inside of a year Byrona would be the center of the automobile racing game of the United States.

Byrona went crazy. As soon as the road was finished, they gave a banquet and had a lot of automobile people and automobile editors and two or three famous drivers out, and that night the first race committee was organized. It was going to take a lot of money to make up a purse and do the advertising and all that, but George Ott and Tod Wright's father and Mayor Cannon got behind the thing, and in about a month it was announced that the first race was fixed for the following Thanksgiving. Eddie Pullen and Tetzlaff and Louis Nikrent and Guy Ball and several other winners promised to enter, and the A. A. A. representatives had said that the meet would be sanctioned. Sid Pilzer, the town sport, turned over the course the first week it was opened, going eighteen miles an hour, and the Byrona people began to put on airs when they went to Riverside or Pomona.

It was a couple of days after I got home for the summer vacation that some one broke into our barn on the upper ranch and towed away my old stripped Leblanc. There was no trace of the thieves, although I borrowed five dollars from dad to advertise for her.

IV.

That fall the folks expected me home for Thanksgiving, but the week before I wired them that I might not be able to come. Then I took the next train for Los Angeles. That was the first time I had met Mickey McGuire, the big driver, but I fell in love with him—and the car. Say, that mysterious entry in the Thanksgiving Byrona—the Byron Special—was a midsummer night's dream! She had the look of power and reliability all over her, and when the engine rolled it sounded like the big trembly bass note on a pipe organ. I had been watching the Los Angeles papers, and I knew about what they were saying. Al Waddell had a piece in the *Pink* that I bought on the train that morning, and it ran like this:

The true story of the entrance of the car which is to carry No. 14 in the Byrona race

Thanksgiving Day may never be known. Mickey McGuire refuses to say anything except that he has an angel who has rebuilt an old machine of a well-known factory brand, and that he is going to drive it into the money. Mickey loves mystery—he loves it better than some of the other drivers, who are a little anxious about No. 14. In the work-outs the past two weeks this lemon-colored tugboat hasn't done anything better than sixty-five miles, where all the other cars have made it up to ninety. The wise ones admit that Mickey hasn't stepped on her yet. She may be able to do one hundred, or she may fall to pieces in the first thirty laps. It's a guess.

The one known element in the problem is Mickey McGuire. With all his bad luck there are few drivers in the game who have as many wins to their credit as he has, and in a car that was known he would be a safe bet against the field to take better than fourth money. What he will do Thanksgiving with the Byron Special is another thing again.

The report that the car is being entered by H. Z. Byron, founder of the town of Byrona and the man who built the Circle Road on which the event is to be run, has been laid to rest definitely and finally. Mr. Byron is a horse lover, and he sees red whenever automobiles are mentioned. He establishes a perfect alibi.

Incidentally Mickey McGuire announced last night that his mechanician will be J. Jones. More mystery. J. Jones! Oh, you Jones!

I judged that we had them all guessing. When we were talking it over in the garage the night before we went out to Byrona for the race, Mickey whispered in my ear that we had a chance to be in the money somewhere, although he didn't have any hope of winning by some of the big fellows. "I've stepped out on the road with her," he said, "and she answers all right-o. But I don't believe she can stand the going if Eddie Pullen or Tetzlaff or Guy Ball make the pace I think they're going to make. All we've got to do is to keep her rolling *and finish*. Our position will depend on the number of cars that burn out or blow up in the last fifty laps."

We went to Byrona very early in the morning, the day before Thanksgiving, and I hid out while Mickey and a boy from the garage drove a few practice laps for appearance's sake. That night we locked ourselves in, and I helped Mickey and our pit manager take the old boat down and set her up again. We finished at two o'clock in the morning, but I wasn't tired. I slept about three hours in the garage, and was up at daybreak giving her the last few touches that make a car shine. At nine o'clock, Tod Wright came in and bandaged me. Mickey had put me onto that stunt. He said that bandaging the whole upper part of the body keeps the vibration from tearing a fellow's flesh loose and setting his nerves on edge. I was glad afterward that he suggested it.

About nine-thirty Mickey showed, and brought our suits. They were lemon-colored, with "Byron" embroidered across the backs. They had heavy cloth helmets that fitted close around the face, and then there were masks, with goggles attached, that went on last. When we were dressed, you couldn't have told who we were without an X-ray machine. It was a nobby outfit in a nobby car, and we got a good hand going along the street and on the course, and a cheer when we stopped at the pits to wait for the starter's call.

I looked up into the judge's stand, which was right next to the press box, on the same side as the pits. I saw Mr. Wright and Mr. Ott and a lot of other leading cits, beside the officials, and Mr. Wright waved to me and jerked his thumb over his shoulder. He was the only person in Byrona except Tod who was onto the scheme, because they had loaned me some money.

I stood up and squinted around behind the stand where he had pointed, and, sure enough, there were the blacks, just pulling up, and dad climbing out with a kind of resigned expression on his face. He stuck up his nose at the automobiles that were parked all around him so thick you could scarcely get between them, and then he went up to the

horses' heads and fooled around with them and gave them lump sugar. He was showing off, and I knew it, because that black team always attracts attention, and they certainly looked out of place at the edge of the Byrona race course that day.

I was shortening a valve spring when Mr. Wright came into the pits with a program in his hand. They had been printed in Los Angeles the day before, and had just arrived. Tod's father had his finger on the entry list, and I glanced down to find out how we looked. Here was what I read:

Starting No: 5. Car: Byron Special. Car No: 14. Driver: Mickey McGuire. Mechanician: J. Jones. Entered by Hiram Z. Byron.

I looked at Mr. Wright. "Has dad seen it?"

He chuckled. "I came down by the rear of the stand and showed him."

"How did he take it?"

"Took it like a cat takes a bath—at first. Then I said: 'I don't know anything about it, of course, Byron, but it looks like a compliment to you, and if I were in your place I'd play up to it. That seems to me what a sportsman would do.'"

"I'll bet that caught him," I said.

"And you win. Your father stiffened up. 'I never thought I'd come to it, Wright,' he said, 'but there never was a Byron, sir, who didn't uphold the traditions of true sportsmanship, sir. Don't say a word—I'll play up, as you call it.'"

"He'll do it, what's more," I told Mr. Wright. "He'll probably let them believe that he planned the whole show as a surprise to the neighborhood. Next thing we know he'll be saying he was the first man who suggested automobile racing on the Circle, which will make the claim unanimous in Byrona."

Mr. Wright shook hands with me and laughed, and then he shook hands with Mickey and wished us luck. By that time the pit line was full up with cars, and some engines were turning over. You couldn't hear yourself whistle, so Mr. Wright went back to the stand, and Mickey nudged me and told me to give her the crank. Old No. 14 was running smooth as a Y. W. C. A. party, and Mickey clapped his hand on my knee.

"She'll do," was all he said, and then Frank Lowry, the assistant starter, came up and gave us the final instructions and our place.

V.

At ten-twenty the starter, Fred Wagner, ordered us out to the line. There were seventeen cars, one entry having gone out the last minute with engine trouble. At the start each rank across the track had four cars in it, making four ranks, with one on the pole behind. As we had drawn No. 5 position, we had the inside in the second rank. Ahead of us was a big Mercer, and at our right was Pullen. The order was to roll around the course once and cross the line for the get-away flag at about forty miles an hour. McGuire liked this arrangement better than the old one of starting four cars at a time with one-minute intervals between fours, and so did most of the drivers. They say that will be the regular start on short courses in America some day soon.

With two minutes to spare, we got the word to turn the motors over. You never heard such a noise in your life. Seventeen high-power engines roaring and coughing would make an ordinary second-rate battle sound like a baby's rattle, and when you're on the ground in the midst of it it's worse than being locked up in a bank vault with a dozen thunderstorms. The smoke was frightful, and I was glad we were in the second rank. Lowry, the assistant starter, was in and out of it for last words with the drivers, and it was just like watch-

ing a man in a heavy fog—part of the time you'd see his legs without any body, and then you'd see his head sailing around loose, and next you wouldn't see him at all though he'd be less than six feet away talking to you. Also the smell! They're using castor oil now on a good many racing cars because it's the smoothest and the highest-efficiency cylinder oil there is. Castor oil *burning*—well, that's all!

I was a little nervous while we waited for the word—I'll admit it. I wasn't thinking about a spill, although on that course a spill is something to think about; but I was just like a fellow at the beginning of a football game, or a girl going to her first dance, I suppose. Luckily there wasn't much time to be nervous in. Two minutes before half past ten, the starter waved his arm, the engines roared, the front-rank cars began to move, McGuire threw in his clutch, and we were away.

When we rolled around after that first lap, we gave them as pretty a start as any one would care to see. Most of my business in the race was to pump oil, keep the air pressure in the gasoline tank at a pound and a half, and watch behind for other cars. So I had a good chance to see the field leave the wire. The one car that was in the fifth rank by itself was so lost in smoke that the driver was trailing, but the other sixteen of us were off in a closely packed square of roaring automobiles.

With a little over three hundred miles to go, and one hundred and nine laps to make it in, it's not surprising that the cars soon stretch out in a string around the course. Every driver has a different theory as to pace, and each one has a different condition to meet, especially in the first ten laps. As far as No. 14 was concerned, we were so boxed in that we couldn't have run out if Mickey had wanted to. In the first two laps four cars passed us, which put us in ninth place. I watched the speedometer in between times, and we hit seventy-five miles an hour before we had gone half a lap. I suppose the boats that pulled by us were doing anywhere from eighty to ninety-five, but of course that was only for a short distance. After we'd gotten up to seventy-seven, we stayed there almost without a flicker of the speedometer needle, for at least twenty laps. And we soon began to pass cars ourselves.

At the end of the fifth, one of the leaders went in to the pits, and we gained a lap on him. At the end of the tenth, we were in seventh position. But in about the twentieth, every driver except Mickey began to step on the throttle, and in the thirtieth we had fallen back to twelfth place. And here was the result: one car was out for keeps, another was dragging part of its steering gear and trying to reach the pits, and at least one engine was missing from overheating or overstrain. As Mickey had said, it was a question of finishing in good condition, and not altogether one of speed.

From the thirtieth to the sixtieth and over, the race was a sort of nightmare to me. The course looked smooth—and it is, as long as you hold thirty miles an hour. But when you get above sixty the vibration of the engine alone is enough to shake a man's teeth loose, and every little high spot seems to come up and hit the bottom of the car like a pile driver working wrong end to. I remember one place, about a mile from the starting wire, where there were three very slight sags in the course. At sixty miles we didn't notice them, and at eighty, which we reached once in a while, we seemed to skim over them. But at about seventy-five we were going just fast enough to jump out of one and into the other, and then out again and into the third, and it wasn't long before I began to dread that place and to go over it nearly crying with the nervous tension and the pain.

Once I tried to relieve the monotony of those blows on my spinal column by lifting myself on the handgrip that was bolted to the floor. I don't suppose that I was up more than half an inch, but when we went into those rough places I bounced three feet, and when I came down it was on the edge of the seat. My right arm, which was around Mickey, was jerked loose, and I clutched at his suit. It saved me from going out, I guess, but it threw Mickey off his balance, and the next thing I knew, or a little before, we were heading for the outside curb, and I could see the crowds weaving back and grabbing at each other.

Mickey shut her off and straightened her nose in toward the inside curb, and I could hear the rear tires take hold of the grit. We rocked up and down once —twice—three times—and I held my breath a little longer than usual, then Mickey opened her up again, and, while I was still wondering which of us'd be alive if we went over the curb, we were flashing by the grand stand on the other side of the course, and Teddy Tetzlaff was just pulling up to the pits for a tire change. After that experience, I held on, and took out my spite on the rough spots with absent treatment.

But in the meantime we had not yet stopped at the pits. As nearly as I could make out from flashing by them, every other entry had been in at least once, and it seemed to me that some of them were making stops as regular as a local train. About the seventieth lap, our pit crew began giving us the signal to come in. On the blackboard they held out to us every third or fourth lap we were getting our position, the lap number, our average speed, and signals about gasoline or tire conditions or whatever the pit manager thought would be useful. Mickey had a good signal system, and we were kept better informed than most of the crews. But with the race about three-fifths run, they began to signal us in. They'd write only one word on the board—"Gas," or "Oil," or "Pits"—and when I saw they were worried it began to get me, too.

Finally I couldn't stand it any longer, and in about the eighty-eighth lap I gave Mickey the emergency signal—my left hand on his knee—and he slowed down so that he could hear me yell.

"They want us to come in to the pits!" I screamed in his ear. Mickey shook his head.

"Gas!" I shouted.

We were making fifty-five miles by the speedometer, and two cars passed us, whirling. Mickey raised her to sixty. "Look into the tanks!" he yelled, and raised her to sixty-five.

Mine wasn't to reason why—but it wasn't to fall off that boat at a mile a minute and better, either. As quickly as I could, without taking more than ten thousand chances of being pitched into the fence, I scrambled around, got a good hold on the handgrip on the back of the driver's seat, and unscrewed the top of the gas tank. The gasoline was churning around in a foam, and I guessed that there were at least fifteen gallons left. When I had gotten that top on, after four or five attempts, I took off the top of the oil tank, and about two quarts of nice, thick, warm goo came up to meet me and plastered itself all over my face mask. I didn't waste any more time on the oil question—I just closed the tank and squirmed around into my seat.

As I did so, Mickey opened her wide and we jumped off the ground. It seemed to me that I had been hanging over those tanks for five minutes, but when I had time to see, I found that we hadn't taken more than half a minute, for we were just rounding in past the stands. The pit crew was frantic, but I waved a hand at them, and, as we passed, patted Mickey on the back with my right, and they put their heads to-

gether as we went out of sight. I suppose they were deciding that we had both gone crazy.

Two hundred and fifty miles finished and we hadn't stopped. As nearly as I could estimate it from the blackboard reports as I caught them, we were making an average of about seventy-five miles an hour. Since then speed has increased, but seventy-five was fast that year for a three-hundred-and-one-mile event. I allege that we were driving some race for consistency! And in the nineties, the leaders began to thin out.

No. 8, which had been leading the field almost from the first, blew up in the back stretch, and was towed off the course. Three cars went out at the pits —for good. No. 11 passed us either two or three times, but when we were close to the one hundredth lap, she lost a wheel and went skittering off through the fence, tossed a dozen people into the air, and sat down to rest on the front porch of a bungalow. It was our turn to begin passing now, for every bus that had an inherent or developed weakness was nursing it by this time, and the feeble sisters were plodding along at broken speeds. And still old No. 14 went on and on and on without a stop, without changing speed, and without a mishap. Almost three hundred miles on one set of tires, and with one load of oil, gas, and water! Just consider it. Am I bragging about that lemon-colored battleship, the Byron Special?

VI.

Nine cars were in the race when we started the one hundred and sixth lap, with three to go. Five of them were ahead of us, on the charts. Mickey began to step out. We passed No. 6. We had a brush with No. 17 that lasted through a lap and a half, and then we passed her. Another car had stopped at the pits, and we made up a lap on her. With a lap and a half to go, we saw No. 1 slow down and stop. In the one hundred and eighth lap, with somebody ahead of us at least three or four minutes, we passed a cloud of dust that I couldn't see through, and then we turned by the stands, Starter Fred Wagner came leaping out, I caught the flash of the green flag, which means "You are starting your last lap," and I looked up into the officials' box.

Of course it was only a glimpse, as we were going away at ninety miles an hour, but I saw dad's face. He was leaning over so far I thought he'd fall into the course, and as nearly as I could judge he was inviting a stroke of apoplexy—waving his arms and pounding on the sides of the box and yelping with the glee of a crazy man. I gave the cylinders a last shot of oil and hugged Mickey with my right arm, and then held up one finger for him to see. He nodded. He stepped on the tail of that panting car. We left the ground and sailed around like an aëroplane, and the big checkered flag jerked across our hood, and our race was over.

In the back stretch we slowed down enough so that I could yell into Mickey's ear.

"Second money, old kid!" I hollered. I usually talk ordinary English, and I don't like the phrase "old kid," anyway. But it's an expression these race crews use a good deal, and it came as naturally as blowing up a tire. It's what I said to him, and I hugged him again and he nodded. Then we were bearing down on the stands with our brakes grinding.

Half a dozen cars were still going, to make their required laps, and at first I couldn't understand who the crowds were yelling for. But we hadn't quite stopped at the pits when here came a mob for us—on the track about fifty photographers and motion-picture men, risking their lives to get to us—out of the pits a gang of crazy lunatics yelling

to know why we hadn't stopped for gas —and from the rear of the pits a bunch of reporters, and Mr. Wright and Mr. Ott and dad and Mickey's wife and my sister Pats! Why nobody was killed I don't know, for the other cars were passing us by inches. But the crowd was as thick as flies around us before the engine died, and they hugged Mickey and me and shook hands and danced and made pictures, and tried to make us take our masks and helmets off, and couldn't. In the course of time, I began to have an idea, and I pushed somebody off my face mask so that I could breathe, and asked:

"Who got first money?"

They looked at me with their mouths open. "First money!" somebody says. "First money! Why, you did! What's the matter with you?"

"First?" Mickey and I yelled together. "Where's No. 4?"

"In at her pit, with a broken timing gear. Been there for the last three or four minutes."

VII.

I didn't have time to say anything. As a matter of fact, I didn't think of anything to say. The last cars were speeding by to get the checkered flag, and some rank outsider like ourselves pulled into third money, and the usual squabble began about lost laps. I looked around, and there behind us was No. 4, hopelessly out of it, less than a hundred yards from the wire. I gulped hard and asked for a drink of water.

Then I saw dad. He had scrambled over the pit barrier some way, and was round wringing Mickey McGuire's hand and dancing up and down like a ten-year-old kid. I think the tears were running down his face, but it might have been perspiration.

"First money!" he was shouting. "First money and the world's no-stop record for a three-hundred-mile course, and five hundred dollars extra for breaking the coast record for average mileage! And in the Byron Special at Byrona, the hub and center of the automobile racing game of America!"

Mickey was taking all this in behind his face mask, and I was grinning behind mine, as you may guess. Mickey says: "You're Mr. Byron, are you?"

"I am, sir," the old gentleman answered, taking off his hat. "I'm Hiram Z. Byron, and I retract all the harsh things I've said in the late past, sir, about atuomobile races."

"And automobiles, Mr. Byron?" I leaned over to ask.

"And automobiles," dad answered, like a flash. "I'm converted, gentlemen. I'm a changed man. I've driven my last horse."

Mickey patted the side of the car as you'd pat a dog. "Your entry did you credit to-day, Mr. Byron."

The old gentleman choked. "My entry! Stuff and nonsense! Do you know whose entry it is? Whoever he may be, he has done me a great honor, in a very sportsmanlike manner, and I desire to thank him."

Mickey coughed. "I don't see any reason why I shouldn't tell you now," he said. "Mr. Byron, let me make you acquainted with the owner of the Byron Special, Mr.—Mr. J. Jones." And with that he turns and jerks off my mask.

Dad stood and stared. The motion-picture men began grinding their cranks once more. Mickey slipped back his helmet, and the newspaper photographers got busy. A couple of reporters edged nearer.

"Yes, it's me, dad," I said, still a little doubtful as to how he'd take it. "It seemed to me that there ought to be a Byron entry in the first Byrona race, that's all, sir. This is my old Leblanc. Tod Wright and I stole it from the barn last spring."

Dad reached over and gave me a cuff

on the ear that rocked me sideways. "You, sir!" he growled, but I saw a smile coming. "You, is it?"

"Yes, sir. And I'd be pleased to make you a present of the car."

He began to laugh, and he laughed until he had to wipe his eyes. I heard him mutter something about "running in the family" and "inherited instincts." Finally he shook his head. "No, thanks, son," he said; "you can keep your fast one. She's too high-spirited for me. I want one, but I want her kind and gentle and free from bad habits like running away for three hundred miles. Mine will be a comfortable, roomy, family automobile, and she's going to have a good, strong, healthy, permeating smell of gasoline. But I'm obliged to you, just the same, son."

Wilbur Hall is an author worth watching Fully a year ago we discovered that, and since then we notice others have followed in our train of thinking. The story by Hall in the next issue corroborates his promise. You must read it. "Chiroptera Insectivora for Luck" is the title, and sets forth the humorous adventures of two auto-race drivers who adopt a bat for mascot. The tale appears in the June 23rd POPULAR.

GETTING THE BEST THERE WAS

HENRY MILLER, the actor, owns in Connecticut the best stage-directed farm in the world. A few months ago, after casting up accounts, and discovering that he had spent several hundred thousand dollars on the farm, he decided to get some of his money back by conducting a high-class, blue-ribbon, gold-medal, A-No.-1 dairy farm.

From this dairy, fleets of automobiles were to carry milk, which would sell at twenty-five cents a quart, to those wealthy people who have discriminating palates and distended bank accounts.

When everything was ready for the start on the great commercial enterprise, somebody said to Miller:

"Henry, you have the wrong kind of stock on your farm. What you want is a really good blooded bull."

That seemed an excellent suggestion to the actor farmer, and he betook himself to a New York exhibit of cattle.

"I don't care how I spend money on this bull," he said to a wise-looking man in charge of matters. "I'm going to get the right kind of a bull; the best there is in the market."

"You want the best bull living?" suggested the man.

"That's just it," Miller agreed enthusiastically. "Where is he?"

"The very finest one I know of," explained the other, "is over there."

"All right," said Miller, concluding the whole matter, "I'll take him."

"It'll cost you a lot of money."

"Don't bother about that."

"He's the finest bull in the world," the man replied. "But I don't know whether you can buy him. A syndicate offered one hundred thousand dollars for him this morning, and the offer was turned down."

"Oh," said Miller vaguely, "bulls must be as expensive as farms."

The Saffron Witness

By Raymond S. Spears

Author of "A Law Not in the Books," "Meanness in the Mountains," Etc.

A midnight drama staged in the section of the big city where the dwellers think in dollar signs

A CUB reporter was walking down Wall Street from Broadway, near midnight, in a faint drizzle of rain. The scattered street lights were reflected on the deserted pavements, and quivered as though on harbor depths. The reporter had been a woodsman, and he knew the balsam swamp, when it drips under autumn rains, but of all the desert places he had ever seen, the South Side, as they called his lonely beat, was the dreariest.

He was bent upon reaching the Old Slip police station before the desk lieutenant should give way to the morning watch, but, like a blow, came a flashing beam from one of the windows on the second floor of the greatest of the buildings across the way. He stopped on the instant to stare.

A man began to pace up and down within that brilliantly lighted office, and his shadow crossed the windowpane, back and forth—the shadow of a tall, spare, stooping man, with a pyramidal head—a lofty forehead, and a nubbin of a chin. His hands twisted, his bent shoulders twitched, and he wavered as he walked.

Then, square before the window, a shorter, stubbier man, the shadow of whose chin was like a clenched fist, halted the walker with a forefinger leveled like a gun—at first the reporter thought it was a gun—and worked his jaws. The taller, weaker man nodded his head, and worked his lips in a "Yes."

Just then an old, one-horse cab came trotting and clattering up the street, and stopped at the entrance of the building. Cabby was muffled in a rubber raincoat, and the horse steamed.

When the reporter looked up to the window again, he was just in time to see the light flare out. A moment later, the street door opened, and a man, whom the reporter recognized as the stocky, impatient man, burst across the sidewalk into the cab. The whip cracked and the horse scrabbled away on the slippery pavement.

The reporter knew nothing of Wall Street of the daytime. He disliked anything so tremendously sordid as Wall Street's reputation, whose people thought in dollar signs, far contrary to the advice of Ruskin, a pocket edition of whose works he carried, volume by volume, around the police stations of the South Side. But this midnight drama was so striking, so clear cut in the midnight gloom, that some faint reportorial instinct was aroused in the observer.

When the taller, weaker man came out of the building, the reporter started toward him on the run, his wits reaching back into his memories trying to think of some question to ask the man as excuse for his intrusion upon him. He had scorned the Wall Street page,

and ignored the Wall Street editions, and he did not have at that instant a single fact upon which to base a question.

The man heard the footsteps, and turned nervously, as the reporter observed, and stopped.

"I am a reporter on the *Monograph*," the cub began. "Is there anything in that conference you have just had for the newspapers?"

"Good Lord, I hope *not!*" the man gasped, stepping back a step as he flinched, adding: "And I hope there never will be!"

The reporter saw that the man's face was twitching, that he glanced up and down the street, as though he was hunted. Yet he did not immediately turn away. Instead, he scrutinized the reporter's face keenly, and his sharp gaze suddenly became strong and penetrating. By the faint light, the reporter could see the eyes glow and flare fiercely, like a cat's.

"The *Monograph?*" the man demanded.

"Yes, I'm on the *Monograph*."

"You're all right; the *Monograph* employs gentlemen!" The man turned and gestured for the reporter to walk toward Broadway with him, as he continued: "No! There's nothing for publication—yet! I hope there never will be; but I wish you'd remember that you saw me here with *him* to-night—this very night! I want you to remember it. What did you see, anyhow?"

"Just you walking up and down the office, and then he came out and shook his finger at you——"

"Good! Good! That's good! Never forget it! Never—and I?"

"You nodded—'Yes.'"

"That's right. I had to. I want you to remember it—this date, this night, this meeting. I'm his man, understand that? I'm his man, to do as he bids. His hired man. If I wasn't—well, I'd be walking the streets. When you went into your office, I'd have to keep on walking. You know what I mean! He made me do it. You'll remember, won't you, that shaking fist?"

"Yes, I'll remember. But when—how——"

"Oh, you'll know when—the papers will be full of it, when—when it breaks."

"All right," the reporter said.

"Here's the witness!" the man exclaimed suddenly, as a Lexington Avenue car came jangling up the street, taking his scarfpin from his throat and thrusting it into the reporter's hand. "Remember! That's my car! Good night!"

He turned and ran, his long coat flapping around his longer heels. The reporter, seeing the man on the car, turned and started to run back down Wall Street to attend to his Old Slip station errand, but, as he did so, the sound of clock bells brought him to a walk. It was too late to see the desk lieutenant, after all.

"Probably nothing doing at Old Slip, anyhow!" he muttered to himself, but went down to the station, nevertheless. There was nothing on the book, the morning watch said.

Thence he walked around the Battery wall, to the harbor police, and back by Church Street police station, to City Hall and into his office. He had nothing to write, and, having now to await the hour of going to press, he covertly examined the scarfpin the man had given him.

It was a round, beautiful, glowing oblate spheroid—an orange in shade. It was saffron in color, under the light, but changed to pale and to dark and back to saffron as he varied the angle of reflection. Against a dark background it was like a coal of fire. After a while, he went to the looking-glass around by the washbasins, and put the pin in his cravat. It was so striking

that he immediately removed it and put it away in his pocketbook.

When he returned to the desk, he turned to the Wall Street news of the evening paper there. He looked at the quotations of stocks, and they blurred in his eyes. They meant nothing to him. He read the gossip of Wall Street paragraphs, and two or three that were anecdotal he felt that he almost understood, but others that related to exchange and money he did not understand. Two brief paragraphs were innuendo, and had absolutely no meaning or point whatever.

Instead of taking the car, he walked across the bridge to his boarding house on Henry Street, and when he was in his six-dollar room, he sat gazing at the pin, charmed by its luster and its fire.

Like the curious incident on Wall Street, like the financial page, the gem belonged to a world of which he knew nothing. Like a necromancer's crystal, it was full of mystery, and yet revealed depths that suggested things of which he had never before dreamed. His Ruskin, Thoreau, Carlyle had not discovered such things to him.

When, after noon on the following day, he returned to his work, he wore the pin in his cravat. He was an ungainly kind of a cub, long-legged, thin-faced, and diffident. His collar was too large, his clothes were ill fitting, and near shabby.

When he entered the office, and walked around to his desk, he was conscious of the fact that at least two of the older, better reporters looked sharply at him. When he sat down, Milton, one of the star men with a desk near by, remarked:

"Where'd you get the luster, Boland?"

The cub blushed unhappily, for he did not like to attract attention, but he answered:

"A man gave it to me."

"Must be a good friend, all right."

Just then the city editor called Milton, and the cub went down into his Ruskin, while he waited an assignment. But Ruskin had lost his savor. Boland, the cub, picked up his *Monograph* and turned to the financial page and read it, from the little boxed advertisements to the closing "bid and offered." He understood it no better than he did some of Ruskin's technical architectural description, but he knew that it was alive, and not a spirit entombed in stones.

The scarfpin attracted a good deal of attention there in the office. One of the reporters said:

"It's a mighty pretty pearl!"

Thus Boland made certain that it was a pearl, on which point he had been doubtful. When one wondered what a pearl like that was worth, Boland had no idea.

"It'd look better in a fifty-cent cravat than in that ten-cent thing!" the reporter remarked brutally, and Boland choked as he turned away. The pruning process for cubs is an unpleasant series of operations. Boland scrimped to buy a new suit of clothes, but defiantly wore the two-bit tie for weeks thereafter. He bought a new hat, new gloves, new collars, everything new before he rid himself of the old tie.

He left his pocket Ruskin at home, and carried newspapers instead. He read financial pages day after day—exchange and all. He began to grow familiar with Wall Street names. He bought a notebook one day and began to write in it all the names that he learned, and he studied the numbers of the Wall Street district, till he knew where all the great financial houses were, and who were at their head. On his days off he went down to the financial district, and looked, listened, became accustomed to the flurry there.

His opportunity came one night. He knew now that the window in which he had seen the little drama was the pri-

vate office of Fraine, Jean Dolge Fraine, whose corporations reached their tentacles around the world. Again he saw the window brightly alight, and again he waited to see what he could see. It was cold, and the east wind bit harshly at his flesh. He saw the flicker of shadows, and, after a time, apparently the same cab came galloping up, and for a certainty the same man, Fraine, came down, jumped into it, and clattered away, around the corner and up Nassau Street.

Immediately afterward, an overcoated figure appeared, and the South Side's station man hurried to him.

"Good evening, Mr. Albane!" he greeted. "Is there any news for reporters to-night?"

"What!" the man exclaimed. "Is there always a reporter waiting here at night?"

"Yes, I am always on the job; this is my beat."

"Oh, it's you, is it? Well, and you've been here ever since?"

"Six nights a week, yes, sir."

"Didn't forget what I told you?"

"No, sir. You said——"

"Never mind what I said. But I wish I had about forty men like you in my offices. Yes, I've some news for you: The Levees have taken over the Rip-rap. There's my car! Good night!"

"The Levees have taken over the Rip-rap!" repeated Boland, and then, ducking his head, he turned and raced to Nassau Street and up to Park Row. Old Slip, the harbor police, Church Street, though they had a murder and a burglary each, had no such news as that.

He hurried up to the editorial room, but he entered with decorum. He took off his gloves and tucked them into his pocket, and then tossed aside his overcoat and placed his hat upon it. Then he sat down at his typewriter and wrote:

Boland.

LEVEES ABSORBS RIP-RAP.

It was stated last night on the highest authority that the long-expected absorption of Rip-rap by Levees has at last taken place. This involves, of course, the Revetment and Willow Islands, and eventually Commission & Harbors.

For some time back, the subject had apparently been sleeping, but the fact now is revealed that it was burrowing operations instead of surface efforts. Presumably, the Fraine interests have succeeded in getting the control of the very extensive Choben holdings, which were understood to have been withheld on account of the now famous encounter in which the elder Choben was so badly squeezed that the famous feud resulted.

Details of the manner in which the feelings were soothed have not been made public, but the future of Levees now rests entirely in the hands of the Fraine interests, including all the ramifications indicated by the Rip-rap interests.

Boland carried the item to the city desk and was about to hang it on the hook, but the night city editor seized it. Boland turned away. When he reached his desk, the night city editor was on his way to the managing editor's desk, where the two men conferred a moment. Then they called Boland to them.

"Where did you get this?" the managing editor demanded.

"From Mr. Albane; there was a conference in Mr. Fraine's office. The old man went uptown in a cab, but I caught Albane, and he said: "'The Levees have taken over Rip-rap; there's my car! Good night!' Then he beat it."

"You know him?"

"Why, I met him once before. He remembered it."

"All right; this is good—if it's straight."

The morning edition of the *Monograph* carried on the first page, at the head of next to the last column, the three stickfuls which the cub reporter had written. The night city editor had added the subhead:

Apparently Begins the Period of Great Expansion Which Wall Street Has Long Predicted.

That day on the Stock Exchange there was such excitement as had seldom been seen around the Levee post, where that famous industrial's securities were sold and bought. The little news item on the first page of the *Monograph* had started the activity, and the evening papers confirmed the item, in detail.

In the *Monograph* office, the financial reporter asked who got the item, and congratulations came with a free hand to the young man. He was called to the desk and informed that he would, thereafter, be on space rates instead of covering the South Side—that meant twenty-five dollars guaranteed instead of eighteen dollars a week.

Boland's first assignment was to go down to write up the arrest of a stock-fake promoter. Such arrests were frequent, and it was not a particularly promising story, but Boland knew Wall Street and he knew the police; he obtained a look at the large bag full of mail which had been seized, along with other things, in the little side street of shady office buildings.

With selections from the mail bag, with records from the books, and with data obtained from the detectives, Boland returned to the office, and, without reporting to the desk, he began to write. He wrote in letters from widows, preachers, lawyers, estate trustees, and other people away back in the rural towns, asking for an accounting, begging for the return of a little of the money to buy medicine for the baby, and other letters forwarded more money, and expressed fond hopes of large dividends.

When at last the city editor asked him for his story, he carried up enough to make nearly three columns, and the city editor scowled at it, and slapped it down on his desk with great impatience—for who likes a space grabber?

But when the city editor began to read the copy, he read it page by page, and then, when the night city editor came in, handed it to him, as if he were conferring a great favor on him. The two leaned over the desk and talked to each other in low voice, and nodded their heads. The story of the raid on the fake-stock promoter was sent upstairs under the head: "Victims of the Sucker List."

The story sent a cold chill through the rascally fringe of Wall Street, and Boland found that he was a specialist in Wall Street fakes. He was sent to expose the oil, rubber, copper, gold, real estate, and other thief promotions.

Thus Boland studied Wall Street with the object of exposing swindles. His specialty developed rapidly into a popular pastime, and other newspapers took up the task, some with gingerly care, some with rampant headlines. The *Monograph,* however, was preëminent. Boland telling his story from the viewpoint of the sucker was unapproachable. Promoters hated the man whom they could never spot, since he played the sucker inimitably. There wasn't a libelous word in any article Boland wrote—yet his exposures were deadly.

One day, when he was down on Wall Street, he stopped and looked at the offices of Jean Dolge Fraine. It was midday, but somehow Boland felt the return of those old days when he was a cub reporter scurrying through the South Side streets from police station to police station, and from hospital to hospital learning what happens to the dregs of humanity.

He was now an "old reporter," and cubs looked up to him. He recognized a dozen men from where he stood—Wall Street men, half of them worth a million or more. Several nodded to him as they passed, for they knew him for a good newspaper man, who exposed

"illegitimate swindles," as they would say.

His eyes wandered up to the darkly ornate Fraine offices, a center of financial activity known the world around. He recalled the night when out of that doorway came two men, one of whom had said to him:

"I'm his man, understand that? I'm his man, to do as he bids. His hired man. If I wasn't—well, I'd be walking the streets!"

"Why did he want me to remember that?" Boland repeated to himself. "What's the game?"

The pearl in his cravat assured him that it was not a dream. With all his knowledge of Wall Street, he could not make up his mind to understand what that had meant—that driven, nervous, harassed man's exclamation.

Boland's face hardened as he gazed at Fraine's windows. He turned away, and walked down to New Street and began to gossip with the pikers there—pikers and has-beens. One of them told Boland that he was selling Consolidated Levees.

"Why?" Boland asked, but the piker shook his head.

"I'm not telling why," he replied. "It's good stuff to get rid of, that's all I'm saying."

Boland sauntered around among a dozen brokers' offices, and mingled with the crowds in the customers' rooms, gathering sheets and pamphlets, and going inside to talk to the brokers themselves. He not only gathered the sheets sent out to baffle the hopes of picking stock-market winners; he secured copies of annual reports of Levees for a dozen years, harking back to the days before Fraine came in.

He carried them up to the office, and read them, beginning in the earlier reports and following them through to date. He read what the tipsters wrote about Levees in letters to customers. He read the bunch of advertising pamphlets, and studied the engravings of the company mills, factories, and plants.

"Levees advertises its goods a long way from the consumers," Boland observed to himself, and then scrutinized the tables showing the business done.

An evening edition was brought in, and Boland saw on the first page a brief item, with a three-column head, stating that one of the great Rip-rap mills was burning, and that a thousand lives were in jeopardy, and many already killed by leaping from windows.

One of the pamphlets, describing the Rip-rap plants, had dilated on the fireproofing used in them. Boland turned the papers over till he found the one that described the factory that had burned. The pamphlet made interesting reading compared to the fact.

On the Stock Exchange, news of the fire made a flutter, and Levees closed down three points.

Boland found more details in the next edition of the evening papers—at least a hundred were dead. He remembered when Fraine had bulldozed Albane. He never would forget that appeal to remember what he had seen. The pile of Levees literature disclosed many things, when read and compared. Walking over to the city desk, Boland said:

"I've got some stuff about Levees—the companies, and about Rip-rap, that mill that burned——"

"Write it up! Write it up!" the city editor snapped. "That fire's hurting the market. Explain how little important that mill is."

"All right," Boland answered, and returned to his desk to write.

There he wrote the story of Levees and Rip-rap. He showed, especially, the economies in the corporations. He quoted the figures to prove how cheaply factories had been built, how machinery had been driven long after the period of depreciation was expected to end their usefulness, how much saving was

made by cutting accounts in the repair shops, and he showed how a great surplus had been used in purchasing new companies with small plants and large capitalization.

Boland wrote three columns about Levees. It breathed reverence for the master intellects that had taught the building world how to be economical in manufacture and extravagant in development. Not for an instant did Boland lose his viewpoint of a New Street piker selling Levees for a decline—and he praised the stock from that viewpoint conscientiously, and when he had finished the article, he carried it to the night city editor and hung it on the hook.

If the city editor had been there, a masterpiece of Wall Street literature would have been lost. The city editor knew Wall Street, and he knew the viewpoint of a New Street bear piker. But the night city editor did not know corporations, except when their mills burned down, and, if anything, the article read to him as though it justified the burning of the mill as a work of God and a monument to the financial sagacity of Jean Dolge Fraine.

"This will read well, now that Levees is attracting attention," the night city editor remarked to himself. He sent the story up. It was put, by the make-up man, opposite the editorial page. The story of the mill disaster was cut down to less than two columns; the account purporting to explain the financial invincibility of the company filled just three columns, which was a good balance for a newspaper protecting Wall Street industries.

On the following day, Levees rallied. It gained what disaster had cost it, and a point to boot. There was considerable agitation around Levees' post, but not so much as there had been in other days when there was less in sight to make for activity.

And yet, on that afternoon, Boland found a not unexpected letter in his mail box—a letter without a stamp, which read:

> The *Monograph* does not feel that it will need your services after March the seventeenth, for the reason that you have failed conspicuously in imbibing the spirit of this newspaper.

Boland accepted the discharge without a feeling of regret, even. He had discovered the greatest, the meanest, the most dangerous of all Wall Street swindles—a vast conspiracy behind a mask of respectability, and fostered under a time-honored name. He had lived up to his occupation of exposing dirty games on Wall Street, and had risen to a height not attained by his employer—and paid the penalty.

But long before his two weeks of grace were up, Boland saw the deadly effect of his blow revealing itself, step by step. There was a demand for an investigation by the authorities which nothing could resist, and Jean Dolge Fraine suffered an acute attack of heart trouble, which broke his health, and he retired precipitately from business and to far watering places in Europe.

But Albane, president of the enterprises, remained behind to face the music—to face the task of holding down the prosecuting attorneys, and guiding affairs before the grand juries that assembled to sit upon the questions of further revelations in the affairs of Levees.

Boland went out upon the street looking for a job. He had often received offers of increase in salary if he would change. Now he went to take advantage of them, but he could find none left open. He was surprised, embarrassed, hurt.

He had earned much money, but had saved little, and now he had only a few hundred dollars left. The savings soon faded away. The reporter grew despondent, desperate, hopeless. He began to call himself a fool for expos-

ing the master swindler of widows and orphans—he knew now that that man's power reached into countless places, proven scoundrel that he was.

Then, one day, when his pride was humbled and his resources at an end, a change came in the fortunes of Boland. There was an opening for him, and his first assignment was to write the human-interest story of Levees, and in the outer offices of the corporation he sat, threadbare, like the others in waiting, talking to the widow on his right, to the broken trustee on his left, to the nervous spinster schoolmistress who came with the widow, seeking salvage of the savings they had poured into Levees.

Then, upon the repeated publication of these bitter tales of privation, the special grand jury acted, and Fraine, Albane, and the rest of the crew were indicted. Trial, in spite of pull and power, followed rapidly. Among the reporters sat Boland.

Fraine forced the issue upon President Albane, and on all sides went up the cry that Albane was the master crook of the corporation, and that on him should be forced the blame, and that he should suffer the consequences.

Albane took the stand in his own defense, a curiously slim, eloquent, resourceful man. He told the story of the crimes that had been committed, but he declared that the real culprit was Fraine.

"I was just the hired man!" he cried. "Nothing but a hired man, dependent upon him for my bread and butter—even as the rest of you must live!"

"But you amalgamated Rip-rap with Levees?"

"Why—I—you see, he told me to—I had to——"

"As a matter of fact, you did it?"

Albane's fingers twitched, and his face drew in his agony till it was wrinkled, and dry as parchment. Around him the inexorable powers were drawing the constricting coils of punishment. He had sold himself, and as the slave he must suffer for the master—so it seemed.

"Who was present when you received those alleged instructions?" the attorney for the prosecution asked coldly.

"I was alone—it was midnight—in his office, on Wall Street——"

Albane choked, and seemed to shrink in his chair. He was now face to face with from three to seven years in the penitentiary—he was already growing old. He seemed to hear the clang of steel gates, hear the clattering of footsteps upon stone floors.

Shaken, cornered, helpless, he drew his forearm across his brow, and then a memory returned to him. He recalled something that he had not thought of in years.

"There's a witness!" he whispered, half to himself. "There was a witness—I can't just remember——"

Fraine, seeing his machine working for his own salvation, turned and smiled faintly upon his own attorney, whose only sign was a deepening of his wrinkles.

"It was ten years ago," Albane spoke up. "Let me think! Let me think! There was a witness!"

His eyes turned from point to point, almost unseeing, as he groped in his memory for something that was just behind the tip of his tongue. Thus his glance swept the spectators in the crowded court, the eager, expectant jury, the attorneys, and then along the reporters' table.

Boland sat there, and as he caught the glance of Albane, he turned and squared his shoulders—Albane's eyes caught the glow of the great and beautiful saffron pearl in Boland's scarf.

Albane's right hand left the witness-chair arm nervously, and, tremblingly, doubtfully, began to point.

"Yes—yes! There was a witness!" he exclaimed. "There—there is——"

He sprang to his feet, crying:

"You—you—the saffron pearl—the saffron witness!"

Tense as the moment was, the reporters all glanced at Boland, grinning. They would never forget that accusation!

Albane hailed Boland, then:

"You remember—you never forgot?"

"Yes, I remember," Boland nodded, taking the pin from his cravat. "This is the witness!"

Six attorneys sprang to their feet, and for an hour there was the confusion of legal smog, but in spite of everything raised, and in spite of subsequent objections, Boland told his story.

"He, Mr. Albane, said to me: 'I want you to remember it—this date, this night, this meeting. I'm his man, understand that? I'm his man, to do as he bids. His hired man. If I wasn't—well, I'd be walking the streets! When you went into your office, I'd have to keep on walking. You know what I mean! He made me do it. You'll remember, won't you, that shaking fist?'

"I did not know then what he meant," Boland admitted, "but his manner impressed me, and I never did forget. When I wrote the story of the Levees swindles for the *Monograph* I learned what he meant, for I lost my job, and I walked the streets because I had offended the leading financial bully and crook of the epoch——"

The attorneys managed to stop him, then, and they brought him back on cross-examination to the previous question. They could not shake his testimony, and the dates were matters of record.

The jurymen leaned back in their chairs after Boland held up the pearl, saying:

"This is the witness!"

Fraine, like a whipped and cornered bulldog, slumped in his chair, growling. Of the codefendants, he saw himself the picked man; neither his astuteness nor his attorneys could stave off the inevitable result of the corroborating exhibit.

"Guilty!" the jury declared Fraine; and they declared Albane guilty, too, but in lesser degree, and the judge dared not let Fraine go free, nor did he dare send Albane to the penitentiary.

"It was a saffron witness that caused this amazing verdict!" the *Monograph* exclaimed angrily in its editorial comment, but it did not escape the honor of having first exposed the conditions in Levees, its rivals taking pains to give it the credit for the first truthful report of the corporation.

A DOG THAT FLIES

THERE is a Boston bull terrier who has attained the distinction of being the first dog to fly. His name is "Monoplane," and he accompanies Mr. S. S. Jerwan, pilot of the Moissant School, on the latter's flights through the air. He has his own small seat beside the airman, and never gets in the way and never shows the white feather and doesn't mind how high or how far they go.

When he cannot accompany Pilot Jerwan he is left to guard the hangar, which he does perfectly, but is the saddest dog in the world at being left behind. He never wags his tail or has a moment's pleasure until the airman returns from his trip in the sky, when he immediately barks with joy. Mr. Jerwan says Monoplane is better company than most people.

A Chat With You

THERE are ten clerks in an office. One of these clerks is to be promoted to something better; he is to go on climbing and climbing till in due course of time he becomes rich and famous. The other nine are to remain clerks all their days. What starts the lucky one on his way up? He looks just like the others. He may or may not be a little cleverer, have a little more executive ability, have more imagination or judgment—but how do people know that? How is it that he gets his first lift, that takes him out of the ruck, up among the leaders in the upward climb? It is the first step toward distinction that counts the most. It is the hardest to take, it is the real point of departure, the jump that takes us out of the groove.

THE first step of this kind is the most interesting point of a man's career. The rest is more or less logical and explicable, but to the first there attaches a certain mystery. Is it blind luck? Or shall we be more serious, and say fate or predestination? Or is it something within the man himself, some hidden and magnetic virtue that draws opportunity in his direction? Emil Reich, the philosopher of Vienna, who has written much on the elements of success in life among individuals and nations, devotes some time to an analysis of those things which we call luck and opportunity, and which seem to lie in wait for some men rather than others. We have not space here to give even an abstract of what Doctor Reich has to say, but his conclusion, after a careful examination of the subject, is that the fortunate ones were simply fortunate in having well prepared themselves for their opportunity when it came. In the majority of cases the preparation is more or less unconscious. It is just an indication of the natural trend of the mind and an evidence of energy and persistence of thought rather than any definite plan of education. When Lincoln ciphered and read by candlelight he had by no means made up his mind to be president. Indeed, it is doubtful if he ever thought of the presidency at all. He simply wanted to know things. His mind was active, and was going after an education.

WE suppose dozens of golden opportunities come to almost every one, but are passed by and unseen because the individual is not ready for them. Stanley Mayo, first mate of a small freighter on the New England coast, had unconsciously been preparing himself all his life for an opportunity. He was no more ambitious than the ordinary young man, but he was ready for the opportunity when it came suddenly out of a clear sky. From the freighter he was lifted suddenly to the bridge of a big, new passenger ship. Only one who has served in our merchant marine can fully realize how big a jump that is.

THE higher up in the world a man goes the more troubles he has. The more money, the more honor; the more worry and responsibility. Mayo's sudden good fortune was only the curtain raiser to a drama in which he was to play a big part. Not long ago Bertrand Sinclair wrote a novel for us, taking as a text the line from Shakespeare: "When Fortune means to men most good she looks upon them with a threatening eye." Stanley Mayo had reason to suspect that the converse of this was true, and that when Fortune seemed to smile upon a man it is when she is ready to do him the greatest harm. His promotion was but the beginning of his downfall. He was raised up only that he might fall the harder. Down to the very bottom, to the very dregs of life, Mayo experienced all the sickening sensation of the drop. A fugitive from justice, working on a miserable schooner, disguised as a negro, Mayo could look back upon his old days when he was a mate of a freighter as upon a lost paradise.

ALL these things are told in the novel by Holman Day, which appears complete in the next issue of THE POPULAR—all these and more besides. The story is called "A Two-spot in the Big Game," and it is a good deal better than the narrative of the career of any one man. It is a peep at the inner workings of a big enterprise controlled by the financial kings. Mayo becomes a cog in a piece of machinery so big that he can only see a little of it at a time. The steamboats are not run from the bridge, but from Wall Street, and it is a cruel, ruthless game. What Mayo considers his good fortune is nothing but the chance that he is found available as one small card in a very big deal. In reading this story you will begin to realize that a man doesn't have to go to the South Seas to find adventure. The adventure in Day's new novel is laid along the Atlantic coast, the romance in it is part of the fabric of modern everyday life. Besides a strong quality of interest, the novel has something that Day puts in everything he writes—plenty of spontaneous, rollicking fun and humor.

THERE are a lot of good short stories in the next issue of THE POPULAR, stories with something extraordinary about them to arrest and hold the attention. Holworthy Hall's new McHenry story, "Art for Art's Sake," is even better than the story in the present issue, and that is saying a good deal. Frederick Niven's Western story, "Five Cents Change," is a picture of the West, a study of character and a drama all in one. Wilbur Hall's story with the odd title, which you will find in two weeks, is the best sort of humor, with all the excitement and adventure of the auto racing driver's life thrown in. "Deegan's Moment" is a rousingly funny story of the drama, and "Beyond the Threshold," by Joseph Ernest, is one of the most thrilling and absorbing tales of the imagination we have seen in years. Besides this, there is the first half of a wonderful and memorable two-part story by David A. Curtis, the greatest writer on games of chance in the world.

One of Every 7 Men is Killed or Injured by Accident Each Year.
Which Will It Be?

YOU may be the one. Your chance is no better than those of the other six. Protect yourself and your family now—while you can. Three cents a day will do it if you are in a "Preferred" occupation. The cost of a couple of newspapers brings $1,250 to $3,250 in case of death by accident, $5 to $10 weekly income, $1,000 to $3,000 for loss of two limbs or eyes, $500 to $1,500 for loss of one hand, foot or eye, $250 for death from any cause. Larger amounts at proportionate cost.

ÆTNA-IZE

If you have other policies, add this because it's so good. If you have no other policy, get this one now. You're in danger every moment. Send the coupon for the whole story and protect your family while you can.

You Get a Weekly Income when Disabled by Accident

It isn't only railroad wrecks and shipwrecks and falling elevators you have to fear.

One man was hit in the eye by a snapping rubber band. It put him in bed for six weeks. He was Ætna-ized, so he drew his weekly indemnity.

One man was struck in the head with a baseball. He had to have a surgical operation and was unable to leave his home for three weeks. He drew his weekly Ætna benefit and Ætna paid for his operation.

One man tripped on a flight of stairs, fell, broke his ankle, went to bed for two months. He was Ætna-ized, so he drew a weekly income and turned his hospital bill over to Ætna.

Send the Coupon for the whole story

ÆTNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
Drawer 1341 HARTFORD, CONN.

The largest company in the world writing Life, Accident, Health and Liability Insurance

Agency opportunities for all Casualty and Bonding lines

Name .....
Occupation .....
Bus. Address .....
ÆTNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
Drawer 1341 HARTFORD, CONN.
I have marked the kinds of insurance I wish to know about: Accident ☐, Health ☐, Disability ☐, $250 Life Certificate ☐.
My age is.....yrs.
I am in good health.
B

ANOLA

—the new dessert confection for all occasions. Taste one—you're delighted; try another, and another, until they're all gone. Crisp, chocolate-flavored sugar wafers enclosing a delicious chocolate-flavored cream filling. In ten-cent tins.

FESTINO—Dessert confections that are really almonds in shape and flavor.

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY

Motor man
Motor "fan"!
Nothing so adds to the joy
Of your spin
As a smooth-drawing
Pipe or cigarette
Of wonderful, zestful, relishable
LUCKY STRIKE.
When you're smoking LUCKY STRIKE
You're glad your car's a smoking car!

LUCKY STRIKE

ROLL CUT TOBACCO

Rich men, who can afford to spend what they like for tobacco, use LUCKY STRIKE. Not for economy's sake. But because riches cannot buy a better Burley tobacco.

That is what LUCKY STRIKE is: honest, pure, old Burley leaf—ripe and nature sweet, aged to mellow perfection.

In a cigarette: Try the new Roll Cut form of LUCKY STRIKE. It's crumbled up just right; makes a compact, rich, even and smooth cigarette. In the handy 5c tin, which is convenient for your pocket.

Also in 10c Tins and in 50c and $1.00 Glass Humidors

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY

A SEA TALE

HOLMAN F. DAY has written a spirited novel of the sea, called "A Two-Spot in the Big Game." It has to do with the attempted consolidation of the coast lines; introduces you to a straight-thinking skipper who believes in a square deal, and some financiers who believe that everything should be subordinated to the almighty dollar. The novel will be printed complete in the *Popular Magazine* for June 23rd.

COMEDY

There will be several humorous stories in that issue also. Notably a story of automobile racing by Wilbur Hall, and another adventure of the famous "Pepper" McHenry.

WORK AND PLAY

Soldiers, adventurers, cowboys, business men, ball players—there will be stories of these—stories you will enjoy and remember—in the June 23rd *Popular*. The authors are: David A. Curtis, Robert J. Pearsall, N. B. Beasley, Frederick Niven, Albert Payson Terhune, H. C. Witwer, and Joseph Ernest.

On sale June 23rd

The Popular Magazine

79 Seventh Avenue, New York

Fifteen Cents

"GAINS 22 POUNDS IN 23 DAYS"

A PLUMP, STRONG, ROBUST BODY

Remarkable Story Told by F. Gagnon. Builds Up Weight Wonderfully.

"I was all run down to the very bottom," writes F. Gagnon. "I had to quit work, I was so weak. Now, thanks to Sargol, I look like a new man. I gained 22 pounds in 23 days."

"Sargol has put 10 pounds on me in 14 days," states W. D. Roberts. "It has made me sleep well, enjoy what I ate and enabled me to work with interest and pleasure."

"Before I took Sargol people called me 'skinny,' but now my name is changed. My whole figure is different, my face is plump and full, my body is stout. Have gained 15 pounds, and am gaining yet. I look like a new man," declared another gentleman who had just finished the Sargol treatment.

Would you, too, like to quickly put from 10 to 30 pounds of good, solid, healthy, "stay there" flesh, fat and muscular tissue between your skin and bones?

Don't say it can't be done. Try it. Let us send you free a 50c package of Sargol and prove what it can do for you.

When hundreds of men and women—and there are hundreds, with more coming every day—living in every nook and corner of this broad land voluntarily testify to weight increases ranging all the way from 10 to 35 pounds given them by Sargol, you must admit, Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Thin Reader, that there must be something in this Sargol method of flesh-building after all.

More than half a million thin men and women have gladly made this FREE TEST that we now offer you; and that Sargol does succeed, does make thin folks fat, even where all else has failed, is best proved by the tremendous business we have done.

Sargol has put pounds of healthy "stay there" flesh on hundreds who doubted, and in spite of their doubts. You don't have to believe in Sargol to grow plump from its use. You just take it and watch weight pile up, hollows vanish, and your figure round out to pleasing and normal proportions. You weigh yourself when you begin and again when you finish and you let the scales tell the story.

Sargol is a tiny concentrated tablet. You take one with every meal. It mixes with the food you eat for the purpose of separating all of its flesh producing ingredients. It prepares these fat-making elements in an easily assimilated form, which the blood can readily absorb and carry all over your body. Plump, well-developed persons don't need Sargol to produce this result. Their assimilative machinery performs its functions without aid. But thin folks' assimilative organs do not. This fatty portion of their food now goes to waste through their bodies like unburned coal through an open grate. A few days' test of Sargol in your case will surely prove whether or not this is true of you. Isn't it worth trying?

50c Box FREE

To enable any thin reader, 10 pounds or more under weight, to easily make this test, we will give a 50c box of Sargol absolutely free. Either Sargol will increase your weight or it won't and the only way to know is to try it. Send for this Free Test Package today, enclosing 10c in silver or stamps to help pay postage, packing, etc., and a full size 50c package will be sent by return mail free of charge. Mail this coupon with your letter to the SARGOL CO., 401-F HERALD BLDG., BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

COME, EAT WITH US AT OUR EXPENSE

This coupon entitles any person to one 50c package of Sargol, the concentrated Flesh Builder (provided you have never tried it), and that 10c is enclosed to cover postage, packing, etc. Read our advertisement printed above, and then put 10c in silver in letter today, with coupon and the full 50c package will be sent you by return post. Address: The Sargol Company, 401-F Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y. Write your name and address plainly and PIN THIS COUPON TO YOUR LETTER.

Copyright, U. S. A. 1915, by
The B. V. D. Company.

"Now, Now, Cool Off—Get Your B.V.D.'s On!"

"HERE you are, carrying the 'Worry' sign, your forehead all wrinkled up like a raisin. Take it easy, Man! Cool off in body and you'll cool down in mind!

"Go send the boy to the nearest store for a few suits of B. V. D. Underwear. Tell him to look for the B. V. D. *Red Woven Label* and to be sure he gets what he asks for. A few suits of B. V. D.—you know, loose-fitting and soft-feeling—keep you cool all Summer. And say, they put such good stuff into it, that it wears and washes fine. Take my tip, and don't let me see you like this to-morrow."

On every B. V. D. Undergarment is sewed
This Red Woven Label

MADE FOR THE
B.V.D.
BEST RETAIL TRADE

(*Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off. and Foreign Countries*)

Firmly insist upon seeing the B. V. D. *Red Woven Label*, and firmly refuse to take any Athletic Underwear without it.

B. V. D. Union Suits (Pat. U.S.A. 4-30-07) $1.00, $1.50, $2.00, $3.00 and $5.00 the Suit. B. V. D. Coat Cut Undershirts and Knee Length Drawers, 50c, 75c, $1.00 and $1.50 the Garment.

The B. V. D. Company, New York.
London Selling Agency: 66, Aldermanbury, E. C.

The readers of the magazine may write to this department about any problem of dress. Every question will be promptly answered, provided that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

ON almost all public beaches the wearing of the one-piece swimming suit, which gained quite a vogue latterly, is forbidden, and thus the two-piece suit, illustrated here, is back in favor. It has a high waist encircled with a white canvas belt. The low, cut-away armholes are preferred by seasoned swimmers, though one should be mindful to guard against sunburn.

Sailor straws show a bent toward crowns a trifle lower and brims much broader. This is the smart young-mannish straw in form and weave.

A novel summer hat is the "half-and-half." The crown is leghorn or Bangkok straw—the brim is felt. The telescoped crown is creased fore, aft, and sideways, the brim is wide and curled, and the ribbon is a broadish affair wound spiral-wise. If you like the alpine shape, there is a brown Italian leghorn, the ultra-smart hat of the Palm Beach and Newport sets.

Drooping-Brim Panama with Fancy Ribbon.

An innovation in straws is the self-conforming sailor shape. By leaving the braid unstiffened where crown and brim join, they are rendered flexible and cushiony, so that when the hat is pressed far down on the brow, it gives and takes like an elastic garter. Thus, it need not be conformed to the head, but fits the first time you clap it on.

The panama is an oft-told tale which, however, never seems to pall. It is not the straw of the average man, but of the connoisseur who prizes the genuine weave like an etching, a porcelain, or a first edition. A fashionable drooping-brim shape is pictured this month.

They are turning out more straight-leg and soft-leg riding boots than at any time within ten years, which proves that "the king of sports and the sport of kings" is by way of coming into its own again.

A motor to speed with, but a horse to chum with—sleek of coat, lean of flank, and sure of

Boston Garter

Velvet Grip

The FIRST CHOICE *of*
Men the World Over
for more than
Thirty Years

Silk 50¢
Lisle 25¢

George Frost Co.
Makers
BOSTON

$2.50 A Month

The masterpiece of watch manufacture—adjusted to the second, positions, temperature and isochronism. Encased at the factory into your choice of the exquisite new watch cases.

19 Jewel Burlington

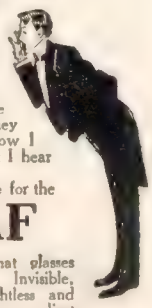
All sizes for both men and women. The great Burlington Watch sent on simple request. Pay at the rate of $2.50 a month. You get the watch at the same price even the wholesale jeweler must pay.

Write Today for Free Watch Book See handsome color illustrations of all the newest designs in watches that you have to choose from. Your name and address on a postcard is enough. Get this offer while it lasts.

Burlington Watch Company, 19th St. & Marshall Blvd., Dept. B-114, Chicago

"DON'T SHOUT"

"I hear you. I can hear now as well as anybody. 'How?' With the MORLEY PHONE. I've a pair in my ears now, but they are invisible. I would not know I had them in, myself, only that I hear all right.



"The **Morley Phone** for the

DEAF

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless. Anyone can adjust it." Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

THE MORLEY CO.,
Dept. 758, Perry Bldg., Philadelphia.

foot, that thrills under knee or rein. That's clean fun in the keen air. There's nothing up to it.

Doubtless, the war has given a flick o' the whip to the vogue of horseback, though it has always been the preferred sport of society here and the aristocracy abroad.

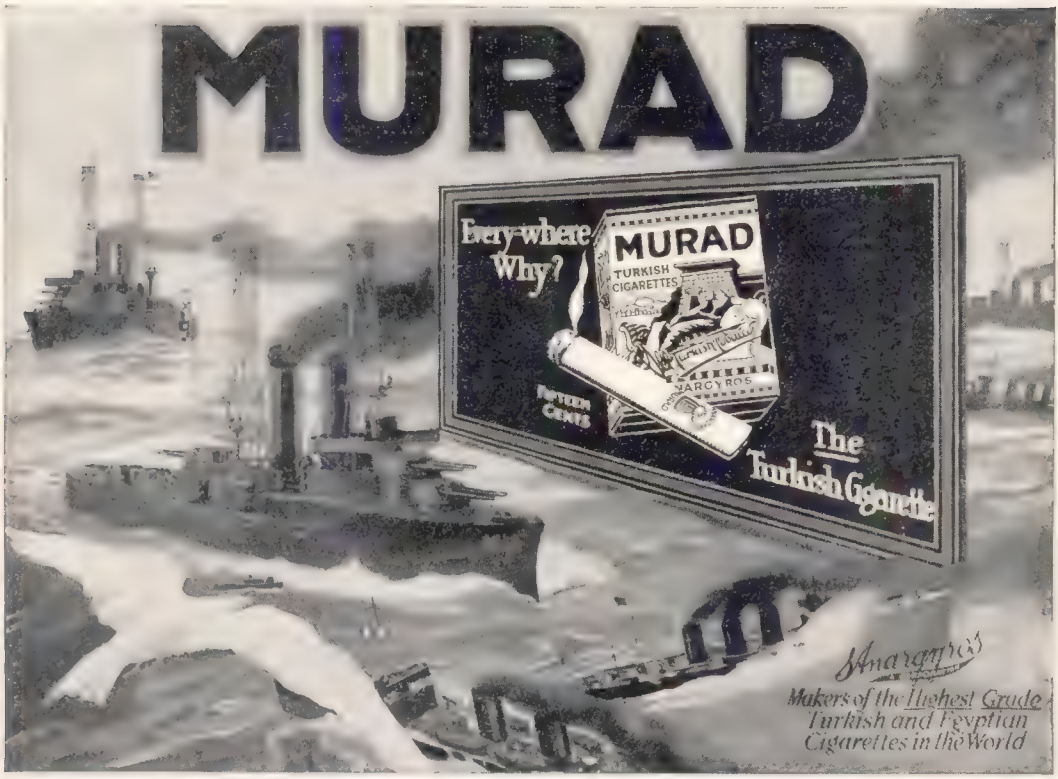
The diagonal striped shirt is a smart novelty. The stripes slope toward the

Two-Piece, High-Waist Swimming Suit with Belt.

center, down which extends a plain broad box pleat. With this shirt one wears a cutaway-front collar and a black sailor's knot (four-in-hand) scarf having a white center stripe to tally with the pattern of the shirt.

Shirts having unstarched bosoms and starched single cuffs are on the gain. They are a sort of straddle between the formality of the stiff shirt and the informality of the soft.

MURAD



Here's the best made .22 Rifle in the world!

It's the only .22 repeater made with the dependable lever action—like a big game rifle. It has better weight, better balance, greater stability than any other .22. It's guaranteed in accuracy and reliability; handles rapidly. It gives 25 shots at one loading.

Model 1897 .22 Calibre Repeating Rifle

Shoots .22 short, .22 long and .22 long-rifle cartridges. For rabbits, squirrels, hawks, geese, foxes, target shooting, etc., no other .22 repeater equals this *Marlin*.

It's a take-down rifle, easy to carry and clean. Has tool steel working parts that cannot wear out. Beautiful case-hardened finish, splendid sights, and the famous *deep* Ballard rifling.

The solid top and side ejection mean safety and rapid, accurate firing. It's the *up-to-date* construction.

This rifle costs more because made better; it hits where others miss; built to last a lifetime. With round barrel $14.50; octagon $16.00. Other .22 repeaters from $9.25 up. Send 3 stamps postage for big catalog of all *Marlin* repeating rifles and shotguns. Do it now! Select the *one best* gun!

Marlin

The Marlin Firearms Co.
9 Willow Street New Haven, Conn.

GENUINE PERFECT CUT DIAMONDS $97.50 Per Carat

A CLEAR SAVING OF 35%. Only from Basch can you get genuine perfect-cut diamonds at the world's competition-smashing price, $97.50 per carat. Full $150.00 per carat value at retail.

And here's the reason: no middlemen's tax included in our extraordinary low direct import price! Cash buying from the diamond cutters, plus our "Small profits, many sales" plan, give you a clear saving of 35 per cent of regular retail prices.

Free Examination—Send No Money!

You prove our claims yourself at our expense. Here's the popular Basch plan: Select any carat size diamond—choose any mounting from the thousands we illustrate in our catalogue. We ship entirely at our expense—allow full examination and comparison, without obligating you to buy. Absolute satisfaction assured you by buying the Basch way.

L. BASCH & CO.
Dept. G2450, State and Quincy Sts.
CHICAGO, U. S. A.

Money Back Guarantee! A written Legal Contract to refund in cash full price less 10 per cent should you wish to return your diamond any time within one year; also guarantees full price in exchange any time. Certifies carat weight and value! No protection equal to this in the whole diamond business. "See that your diamond is Basch guaranteed."

1915 BASCH DE LUXE DIAMOND BOOK, FREE

Complete, valuable, and authoritative! Gives you expert facts needed to buy intelligently. Helpful guide to select gifts for all occasions. Thousands of illustrations of diamonds, watches, platinum and gold jewelry, silverware, cut glass, etc.—all priced to you at remarkably low figures. You cannot afford to buy your diamond or jewelry without a copy of this complete catalogue. Mail coupon or write us a letter or post card for your FREE copy, NOW.

FREE DIAMOND BOOK COUPON

Please mail me FREE, without obligation, Basch De Luxe Diamond Book.

Name _____

Address _____

L. BASCH, Dept. G2450, State & Quincy Sts., Chicago

DIARY *January 22, 1820*

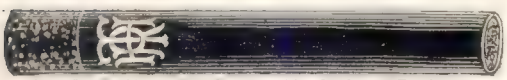
A cold day, and blustery, coming from town. I was mighty glad to see the lights of the Inn, where I was soon made comfortable at the fire with my favorite

OLD OVERHOLT RYE

"Same for 100 years"

For over a century this delightful pure Pennsylvania Rye has cheered men's hearts. What more strengthening than good Old Overholt? Aged in the wood, bottled in bond.

A. Overholt & Co. Pittsburgh, Pa.



MARMAY MONOGRAM CIGARETTES

Made by *hand*, of selected *Turkish* tobacco, blended to suit your taste Your own Monogram, Crest, Coat-of-Arms, Frat Mark, without extra cost

Trial Order of 100 for $2.00 or send 30c for 15 cigarettes, showing assortment of monograms, tips and blends

Ladies' Sizes with and without Perfume

All shipments in Plain Packages, Insured and Prepaid

MARMAY MFG. CO. Dept. D 136-138 South 4th Street, Philadelphia

Be an Artist.

We Buy Our STUDENTS' DRAWINGS

Earn big money drawing for newspapers, magazines, etc. **All branches of art taught.** Our practical system of personal instruction by **MAIL** develops your talent. Write for **illustrated magazine**, terms and lists of successful **pupils.** Local classes also. **ASSOCIATED ART STUDIOS, 2127 Flatiron Bldg., NEW YORK.**

Amazing Bargains

Write today for our latest bulletin. Shows hundreds of remarkable bargains in diamonds and other jewelry. Our customers letters show as much and more than

1/2 Saved

on gorgeous gems, watches, etc. **Diamond Banking** our Business. Exquisite jewelry on which we loaned money. You get the benefit—astounding unpaid loan prices. Write for bulletin.

Free Examination See any of our offerings before you buy. We pay express.

Money-Back Guarantees by a firm of over 60 years, rated over $750,000.00. Reference by permission Farmer's Deposit Bank, Marine National Bank.

Write Today No obligations. Get our latest bulletin. It's free.

Jos. DeRoy & Sons *Only Opposite Post Office*

912 DeRoy Building - Pittsburgh, Pa.

Only $7.85

No. 324587. ⅛—3/32 kt. dazzling brilliant fine quality blue-white solitaire genuine diamond in 14-kt. gold scarf pin or lady's ring. Try to match at $20. **Unpaid Loan Price, $7.85.** Other Unpaid Loan genuine diamonds $2.90 to $950.

A quirk of fashion in fabric-top boots is to have the uppers of the same stuff as your suit. The idea is passable enough, though you lose that differentness of suit from boot which is smart in these days when contrast, rather than harmony, is sought.

Such same-fabric uppers are seen even in shepherd's checks, Highland plaids, and bold stripes, as well as in monotone colors, though loudness must be cried down as vulgar.

A new sport topcoat has the "needlepoint" lapels. It is knee length, with slanting pockets and cuff tops cut to match. The lapels are long and low. This type lapel has the seasoning of novelty, and lends a well-defined character to one's topcoat or lounge jacket.

Most trousers hang too high or too low. The present-day fashion is to have them flex over the instep with a slight, very slight, forward spring or bell-shaped flare. Thus, trousers and boot tops melt into one without that sharp line of demarcation which is unpleasant to see.

The width of trousers leg must be governed by what's in them. Very narrow trousers on over-plump calves do not drape well, and are prone to "kick up" behind, throwing the whole leg out of plumb. Have your trousers cut wide enough to feel comfortable and to slide up and down without having to tug at them or shake your leg when you get up.

With afternoon clothes, one may wear striped gray worsted trousers, or black trousers with white silk stripes, or, newest of all, the shepherd's check trousers, often mentioned here.

A boutonnière to a man is like perfume to a woman—to be used with discretion. It should catch the tail of one's eye rather than hit one between them.

None but a white flower may accompany evening dress. Every other color is clearly absurd in a theme dedicated to black and white and nothing else.

Evening coats with a breast pocket out of which the handkerchief peeps render a boutonnière superfluous, as the two spots of white against the background of white shirt and white waistcoat are an overload.

At the most only the hem of your handkerchief should show, when a boutonnière tops it. BEAUNASH.

EVINRUDE

DETACHABLE ROWBOAT & CANOE MOTORS

enable you to instantly convert any kind of craft—rowboat, sailboat, houseboat or canoe—into a power boat. The Evinrude drives an ordinary rowboat 7 to 8 miles an hour—a canoe 10 to 12 miles—and runs four hours on less than a gallon of gasoline.

So light that it can be carried with you anywhere. So strong that it is practically unbreakable. So simple that women and children find no difficulty in operating it the first time they try.

Write today for booklet describing the 1915 model—the last word in portable marine motors.

Evinrude Motor Company
79 Evinrude Blk., Milwaukee, Wis., U. S. A.

Distributing Branches:
69 Cortlandt St., ... New York, N. Y.
218 State St., ... Boston, Mass.
436 Market St., . . . San Francisco, Cal.
182 Morrison St., ... Portland, Ore.

38437-41201

Wrinkles

Thousands have successfully used this for nearly 30 years to remove traces of age, illness or worry: 1 oz. of pure

Powdered SAXOLITE

dissolved in ½ pt. witch hazel; use as a face wash. The effect is almost magical. Deepest wrinkles, crow's feet, as well as finest lines, soon begin quickly vanish. Face becomes firm, smooth, fresh and you look years younger. No harm to tenderest skin. Get genuine Saxolite (powder) at any drug store.

I will send my 25c Book

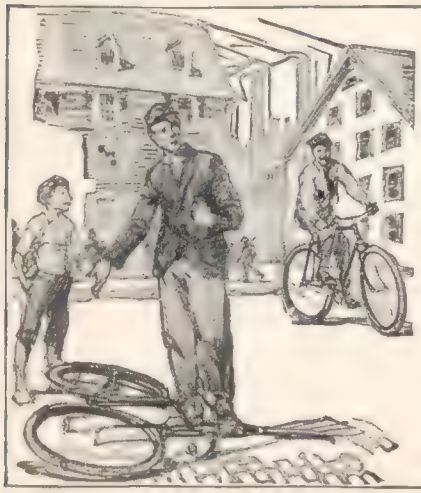
Strong Arms

for 10c in stamps or coin

Illustrated with twenty full-page half-tone cuts showing exercises that will quickly develop, beautify and gain great strength in your shoulders, arms and hands, without any apparatus.

PROF. ANTHONY BARKER
481 Barker Building, 110 West 42nd Street, New York

For **MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN**

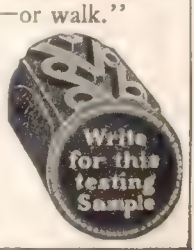


"Cheap Tires Don't Pay!"

It has cost me more in repairs than a *good* tire would have cost in the first place. Hereafter I buy good tires—or walk."

VITALIC Bicycle Tires

Have a tread that is good for thousands of miles of hard riding. A fabric so strong it can't blow out. An inner-tube of rubber so heavy and pure that it can't leak air. Send for testing sample and prove these claims.



FREE—Story "The Man who Rode on His Rims"

CONTINENTAL RUBBER WORKS
1974 Liberty Street **Erie, Pennsylvania**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Agents & Help Wanted

AGENTS—DELICIOUS SOFT DRINKS in concentrated form. Always ready—just add water—economical—absolutely pure. Every housewife wants them—14 different kinds. Enormous demand—Big summer sellers—money comes easy. 250 other popular priced, fast selling, household necessities. We furnish free outfits. Write today—now—American Products Co., 2257 American Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

I MADE $50,000 in five years with a small mail order business; began with $5. Send for free booklet. Tells how. Heacock, Box 717, Lockport, New York.

FREE to any woman. Beautiful 42-piece dinner set for distributing only 3 dozen cakes of Complexion Soap Free. No money or experience needed. R. Tyrrell Ward, 224 Institute Place, Chicago.

AGENTS—The biggest seller out. Beer in concentrated form; a good glass wanted by everybody; so convenient, so cheap; show it, sell them all; carry right in your pocket; enormous demand, big profits; send no money; just a postal for free sample proposition. The Ambrew Co., Dept. 2162, Cincinnati, O.

"AGENTS—400 Snappy Aluminum Specialties and Utensils, means a sale in every home. General Sales Course Free. $50.00 a week sure. Answer quick. American Aluminum Mfg. Co., Div. S 49, Lemont, Ill."

GOVERNMENT positions pay big money. Get prepared for "exams" by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Free booklet. Patterson Civil Service School, Box Y, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS make big money and become sales managers for our goods. Fast office sellers. Fine profits. Particulars and samples free. One Dip Pen Co., Dept. 9, Baltimore, Md.

MEN OF IDEAS and inventive ability. New list of "Needed Inventions," "Patent Buyers," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Dept. 63, Wash., D.C.

AGENT—Great opportunity to be permanent representative largest manufacturers high grade soaps and toilet goods. $25—$75 weekly. Write for immediate appointment. E. M. Davis Co., R. 21 Davis Bldg., Chicago.

$250 FOR RELIABLE MAN OR WOMAN; distribute 2000 free packages Borax Powder with Soaps, etc., in your town. No money or experience needed. R. Ward Co., 224 Institute, Chicago.

Men—Women Wanted. $75 month. Government jobs. Write for list positions now obtainable. Franklin Institute, Dept. W. 6, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS—SOMETHING NEW—FASTEST SELLERS and quickest repeaters on earth. Permanent, profitable business. Good for $50 to $75 a week. Address, American Products Co., 699 Third Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued.

WANTED. Men and women to qualify for Government positions. Several thousand appointments to be made next few months. Full information about openings, how to prepare, etc., free. Write immediately for booklet G-11, Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

AGENTS—$300 every month selling our wonderful 7-piece Kitchen Set. Send for sworn statement of $12 daily profit. Outfit free. Thomas Mfg. Co., 260 Third St., Dayton, Ohio.

Advertising

WILL POSITIVELY SHOW YOU by mail how you can earn $25 to $100 week writing advertisements. Biggest field in the world for you. Information free. Page-Davis Co., 5, Chicago, Ill.

Business Opportunities

FREE FOR SIX MONTHS.—My Special offer to introduce my magazine "Investing for Profit." It is worth $10 a copy to anyone who has been getting poorer while the rich, richer. It demonstrates the real earning power of money and shows how anyone, no matter how poor, Can acquire riches. Investing for Profit is the only progressive financial journal published. It shows how $100 grows to $2,200. Write Now and I'll send it six months free. H. L. Barber, 407, 20 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago.

WOULD you like to own a good paying mail order business? We have a line that gets repeat orders all the time. You can start in spare time. Invest a dollar or two a week and soon own a nice business of your own. Particulars free. Nadico, 1659 Belmont Avenue, Chicago.

Motion Picture Plays

I guarantee $10 for first Photo Play you write by my method. Obtain free booklet "How To Write Photo Plays." Elbert Moore, Box 772 H T, Chicago.

WRITE Moving Picture Plays: $50 each; all or spare time; correspondence course unnecessary; details free. Atlas Pub. Co.,313 Atlas Bldg.,Cin., O.

WE ACCEPT Mss. in any form; criticise free; sell on commission. Details free. Story Rev. Co., 11 Main, Smethport, Pa.

Firearms Wanted

FIREARMS—Old-time and Modern. Buy, sell, exchange all sorts. Stephen Van Rensselaer, West Orange, New Jersey.

Telegraphy

THE Omnigraph Automatic Transmitter. Sends you telegraph messages. Teaches in the shortest time. 5 styles $2 up. Circular free. Omnigraph Mfg. Co., 39 N Cortlandt St., N. Y.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS SECURED OR FEE returned. Send sketch for free report as to patentability. Guide Book and What to Invent, with valuable List of Inventions Wanted, sent free. One Million Dollars offered for one Invention. Patents secured by us advertised free in World's Progress, sample free. Victor J. Evans & Co., 767 Ninth Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS, Trade-Marks and Copyrights. Our handbook on patents will be sent free on request. All patents secured through us are described without cost to the patentee in the Scientific American. Munn & Co., Patent Attorneys, 682 Woolworth Bldg., N.Y. Washington, D. C., Office, 625 F St.

PATENTS, TRADE-MARKS. Send for my free book "How To Get Them." It's full of information you should know. Joshua R. H. Potts, 8 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, 805 G. St., Washington.

IDEAS WANTED—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. 3 books with list 200 inventions wanted sent free. Advice free. I get patent or no fee. R. B. Owen, 39 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

Music and Song Poems

SONG poems wanted for publication. Past experience unnecessary. Our proposition positively unequalled. Send us your song poems or melodies today or write for instructive booklet—it's free. Marks-Goldsmith Co., Dept.15, Washington, D. C.

SONG Writers "Key to Success" Free! We compose and facilitate free publication or sale. Submit Poems. Knickerbocker Studios, 530 Gaiety Bldg., New York.

Salesmen

TRAVELING Salesmen Wanted—Experience not necessary. Earn big pay while you learn by mail during spare time; only eight weeks' time required, one or two hours a day. Steady position, easy work. Hundreds of good positions to select from. Write today for free book, "A Knight of the Grip," containing full particulars and testimonials from hundreds of students we have placed in good positions who are earning $100 to $500 per month. Address Dept. B-12, National Salesmen Training Association, Chicago, New York, San Francisco.

GREAT Opportunity for general agents selling new specialty to merchants; retails $5, $10, $15 each. Your profit 200%. No competition. Exclusive territory. Free Samples. Sayers Co., 413 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

Short Story Writing

YOU CAN WRITE A SHORT STORY. Many sell their stories before completing the course. We will help you sell them. School Short Story Writing, Dept. 5, Page Building, Chicago, Ill.

REAL HAIR GROWER

FOUND AT LAST!

Grows Hair in 30 Days.

$1000.00 Reward If We Fail On Our Guarantee—Try It At Our Risk—Mail Coupon To-Day.

This Man Is Growing Bald—"Crystolis" Is Just the Thing for Such Cases.

In Europe "Crystolis" has been called the most wonderful discovery of the century.

The judges of the Brussels and Paris Expositions enthusiastically awarded Gold Medals to this marvelous hair grower.

Already since we secured the American rights hundreds of men and women have written telling of the phenomenal results obtained by its use. People who have been bald for years tell how they now glory in beautiful hair. Others who have had dandruff all their lives say they have got a clean, healthy scalp after a few applications of this wonderful treatment.

We don't care whether you are bothered with falling hair, prematurely gray hair, matted hair, brittle hair or stringy hair; dandruff, itching scalp or any or all forms of hair trouble, we want you to try "CRYSTOLIS" at our risk.

We give you a binding guarantee, without any "strings" or red tape, that it won't cost you a cent if we do not prove to you that "Crystolis" will do all we claim for it—and what's important, we have plenty of money to back our guarantee. $1,000 has been deposited in our local bank as a Special Fund to be forfeited if we fail to comply with this contract. Cut out the coupon below and mail it today to Creslo Laboratories, 401-U Street, Binghamton, N. Y.

FREE COUPON

The Creslo Laboratories,
401-U Street, Binghamton, N. Y.

I am a reader of the POPULAR MAGAZINE. Prove to me without cost how Crystolis stops falling hair, grows new hair, banishes dandruff and itching scalps and restores prematurely gray and faded hair to natural color. Write your name and address plainly and

PIN THIS COUPON TO YOUR LETTER.

Resolve to Win!

Determination made Grant one of the greatest generals in history. The world knows his story. It knows, too, the stories of thousands of other determined men, who succeeded because they had a purpose and stuck to it.

Do you want to succeed? Do you want that better job? Do you want that increase in pay?

If you *do* want to get out of the rut—if you *are* determined to make something of yourself, send the International Correspondence Schools the attached coupon. Tell them what kind of position you want and they will show you how you can fit yourself to get it.

More than 500 determined men and women got better positions last month solely as a result of I. C. S. training. They secured this training in their own homes, at small cost and without losing time from their every-day work.

Determine to mark and mail the coupon to-day

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 855 SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X

ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING	SALESMANSHIP	
Electric Lighting & Railways	ADVERTISING	
Telephone Expert	Window Trimming	
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	Show Card Writing	
Mechanical Drafting	Lettering and Sign Painting	
Gas Engines	ILLUSTRATING	
CIVIL ENGINEERING	Designing	
Surveying and Mapping	BOOKKEEPING	
MINE FOREMAN AND SUPT.	Stenography and Typewriting	
STATIONARY ENGINEERING	Higher Accounting	
ARCHITECTURE	Commercial Law	
Building Contractor	GOOD ENGLISH FOR EV'YONE	
Architectural Drafting	Teachers Course	
Concrete Engineering	English Branches	
Structural Engineering	CIVIL SERVICE	Spanish
PLUMBING AND HEATING	AGRICULTURE	German
AUTO RUNNING	POULTRY	French
Motor Boat Running	Chemistry	Italian

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

PICTURE-PLAY WEEKLY

has secured ***Exclusive Rights*** to fictionize the Essanay comedies of

Charles Chaplin

In this magazine, the livest motion-picture publication, ***and nowhere else,*** you can read these side-splitting comedies cleverly written in ***story form.*** They will keep you rocking with laughter as do his antics on the screen.

You'll find the things he says as funny as the things he does.

Don't miss them, for they appear ONLY in

PICTURE-PLAY WEEKLY

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

Five cents everywhere

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York

My Magazine "Investing for Profit" FREE for Six Months

Send me your name and address right NOW and I will send you **Investing for Profit** magazine **absolutely free** for six months. It tells how to get the utmost earnings from your money—how to tell good investments—how to pick the most profitable of sound investments. It reveals how bankers and capitalists make **$1,000 grow to $22,000**—in fact gives you the vital investing information that should enable you to **make your money grow proportionately.** I have decided this month to give 500 six month subscriptions to **Investing for Profit FREE!** Every copy is

Worth at Least $10

to every investor—perhaps a fortune. Send your name and address now, mention this paper and get a **Free** introductory subscription. Conditions may prevent repeating this offer. Better take it now. You'll be willing to pay 10c a copy after you have read it six months.

H. L. BARBER, Pub., R418 30 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago

YOU CAN MAKE **CIGARETTES** LIKE THESE

A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

TURKO CIGARETTE ROLLER

Sent postpaid for **25 cts.** Address,

Turko Roller Co., Box 38, Station H, New York City

:: POCKET EDITIONS ::

USEFUL SUBJECTS 10c. EACH

Sheldon's Letter Writer; Shirley's Lover's Guide; Woman's Secrets, or How to Be Beautiful; Guide to Etiquette; Physical Health Culture; Frank Merriwell's Book of Physical Development; National Dream Book; Zingara Fortune Teller; The Art of Boxing and Self-defense; The Key to Hypnotism; U. S. Army Physical Exercises.

Street & Smith, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Ave., New York

UNCLE SAM IS BEST EMPLOYER;

pay is high and sure; hours short; places permanent; promotions regular; vacations with pay; thousands of vacancies; all kinds of pleasant work everywhere; no layoffs; no pull needed; common education sufficient. Special money back guarantee if you write today for booklet B-899. IT IS FREE.

EARL HOPKINS, - - WASHINGTON, D. C.

GET A BETTER PLACE

AGENTS

ROAD TO WEALTH

MAKE BIG MONEY

SOMETHING NEW! Exciting business for agents. Sell "Ambrew"—a concentrated beer made of Barley Malt and Hops—Just add water. Pure Lager Beer with snap and sparkle, topped with rich creamy foam. Made in a few minutes at home, anywhere—1 cent a glass. Guaranteed under the U. S. Pure Food Laws. Can be sold everywhere, wet or dry. Guaranteed strictly legitimate. No license required. Everybody buys. big repeater, 100 per cent profit. Small, compact, carry the beer in concentrated form in your pocket and supply the enormous demand. Innis sold 3000; Dickinson 500; Johnson made $110, says: "Sells like wildfire." Others coining money. $6 to $12 day. Territory being snapped up—all or spare time. How to get free sample. Be quick. Just a postal today for free booklet "Secrets of Making Beer at Home" and 30 day trial offer.

THE AMBREW CO. Dept. 2309 CINCINNATI, OHIO

DIAMONDS

ON CREDIT—$ TERMS AS LOW AS 2.50 A MONTH

Send for Jewelry Catalog No. 57

containing over 2,000 beautiful illustrations of Diamonds, Watches, Artistic Jewelry, Silverware, Cut Glass, etc. Select anything desired, either for personal wear, or for a gift to friend or loved one, then ask us to send the selection for your examination. It will be sent, all charges prepaid by us.

YOU PAY NOTHING—NOT ONE CENT

until you **see** and **examine** the article **right in your own hands.** If you like it, pay one-fifth of the purchase price and keep it, balance divided into eight equal amounts, payable monthly. If not entirely satisfactory, return at our expense. You assume no risk; you are under no obligation. Our Catalog tells all about our Easy Credit Plan. Send for it **Today.** It is **FREE.**

LOFTIS BROS. & CO., The National Credit Jewelers

Dept. B 845, 100 to 108 N. State Street, Chicago, Illinois

(Established 1858) Stores in: Chicago : Pittsburgh : St. Louis : Omaha

$2 A MONTH FREE TRIAL

Late Style Visibles. Every modern operating convenience. Back Spacer—Tabulator—Two Color Ribbon—Automatic Ribbon Reverse, etc. **Bargain Prices.** Perfect machines with complete equipment and every extra. **Guaranteed for life. Free** circular describes special Five Days' Trial Offer.

H. A. SMITH, 653—231 N. Fifth Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Delivered to You Free

A sample 1915 model ***"Ranger"*** bicycle, on approval and **30 DAYS TRIAL** and free riding test.

Write at once for large illustrated catalog showing *complete line* of bicycles, tires and supplies, and the *most marvelous offer* ever made on a bicycle. You will be astonished at our ***low prices*** and *remarkable terms.*

RIDER AGENTS Wanted—Boys, make money taking orders for Bicycles, **Tires** and Sundries from our big catalog. **Do Business** *direct* with the leading bicycle house in America. **Do not buy** until you ***know*** what we can do for you. WRITE TO US.

MEAD CYCLE CO., DEPT. G-38 CHICAGO

New Illustrated Book FREE

Write at once for your free copy of this intensely **interesting** illustrated book showing how disease is successfully eradicated through advanced Drugless Healing.

CHIROPRACTIC

Our direct, practical, profusely illustrated course surely and quickly prepares you **at home,** during spare time, to enter this amazingly profitable profession. Everything so clear and easy that if you can read and write, you can readily master it—splendid openings. Easy, pleasant and surprisingly lucrative. Chiropractors make as high as **$25 a Day**

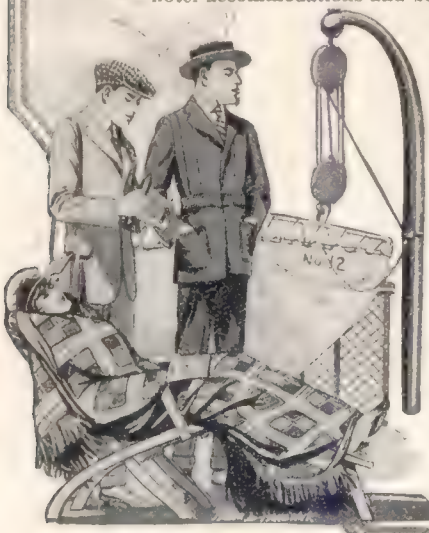
Free Charts and Lessons

For a short time only we offer five complete lesson sections of the Course and $15 set of 8 charts, **absolutely free.** This offer strictly limited. Send your name and address today for valuable free illustrated book on drugless healing and full particulars.

American University, Dept. 341, 162 N. Dearborn St., Chicago

Take Your Ocean Trip This Year on America's Great Inland Seas

The most wonderful vacation yet—a thousand mile voyage on the Great Lakes, and an outing in the north country. The historical resorts of Northern Michigan await you with all the enchantments of primeval nature—shady majestic woods, delightful waters, awe-inspiring scenery. Every pleasure is there—bathing, boating, fishing, golfing, camping, sight-seeing. First-class hotel accommodations and boarding houses at reasonable rates.



The Coast Line to Mackinac—Six Trips Weekly

Four trips weekly from Toledo and Detroit to Mackinac Island and Way Ports. Special steamer, two trips weekly from Cleveland, June 25th to September 10th, direct to Mackinac Island, no stops enroute except at Detroit and Alpena. In addition to above, D. & C. line operates daily service between Detroit and Cleveland and Detroit and Buffalo. Delightful day trips between Detroit and Cleveland during July and August, four trips weekly. Daily service between Toledo and Put-in-Bay.

Railroad Tickets accepted for transportation on D. and C. Line steamers between Detroit and Buffalo or Detroit and Cleveland, either direction. Send two cent stamp for illustrated pamphlet and Great Lakes Map, containing information regarding routes and rates. Address, L. G. Lewis, Gen. Passenger Agent.

A set of artistic poster stamps sent on receipt of five cents

"D. & C. Talisman" Send one dollar cash or money order, for D. & C. Good Luck golden frog men's scarf pin or women's brooch pin, set with Mexican rubies and emeralds.

DETROIT & CLEVELAND NAVIGATION COMPANY

13 Wayne Street, Detroit, Michigan

PHILIP H. McMILLAN, Pres. A. A. SCHANTZ, Vice-Pres. & Gen. Mgr.

All D. & C. Steamers arrive and depart new Third Ave. Wharf, Detroit

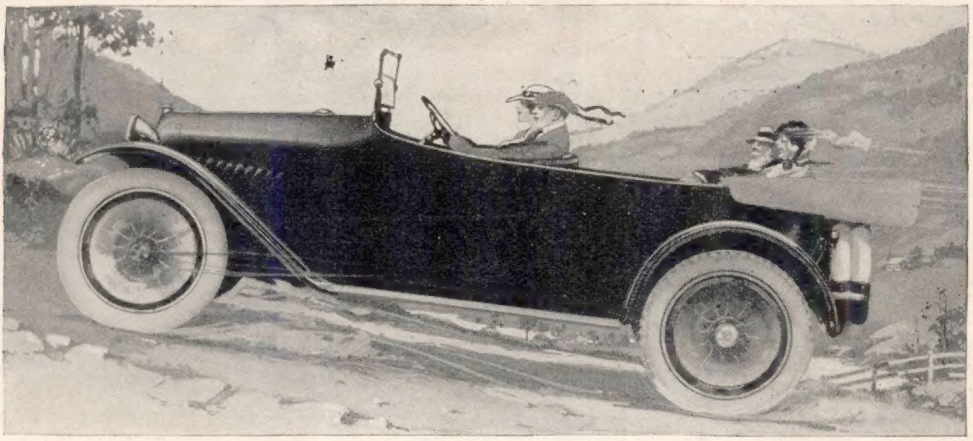
Bud Cigarettes

Plain or Cork Tip. Made of Selected Pure Turkish Tobacco, with a distinctive blend which is appreciated by smokers of discrimination and taste. 100 Bud Cigarettes securely packed in *Red Cedar Wood Boxes, with Brass Hinges and Spring Catch.* Send us $2.00 for above box of 100. Sent postpaid to any address. You'll be glad to smoke 'em. The Bud Cigarette Company, 2 Rector Street, New York City.

IF you do not care to send for the cedar box of 100, ask your dealer for case of ten. This is the greatest novelty box in the cigarette business. The box will make a hit with you, but the cigarettes will make you want them always.

20¢

the case—plain or cork tip.



—smooth as a turbine driven steamship

The 8-cylinder motor is, in action, the nearest approach to the turbine ever produced in gas-motor designing. It provides ideal locomotion; is silent, vibrationless, and unbounded in power. Have you examined the DETROITER Eight? If not, there is a delightful experience awaiting you–from 2½ miles to the exhilaration of 50 an hour on high gear, gear shifts forgotten.

Detroiter "8"

$1295

Also—the famous Four

$985

Platform spring (easy riding), full floating axle (greatest accessibility), dry plate clutch (smooth engagement), 20-foot turning radius (advantageous in traffic and narrow streets), one-man top, genuine buffed leather upholstery, duplex tire carrier, 24-inch doors—all this in the DETROITER Eight, for less than the price of the average Six.

Complete catalog of all models on request

BRIGGS-DETROITER COMPANY

652 Holbrook Avenue **DETROIT, MICH.**

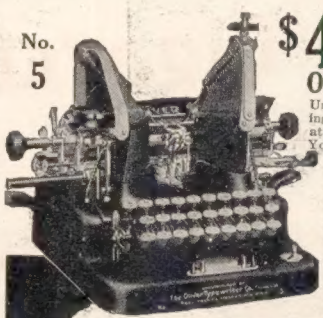
Learn to Pitch!

Every fan admires the baseball pitcher who cleverly strikes out the other side in one, two, three order. He wonders just how it's done; well, **"The Secrets of Pitching,"** just published, tells all about it.

Burt L. Standish is the author, and he explains in a most scientific manner just how every curve known to baseball is pitched. Careful directions are given as to how the ball must be held to make it accomplish all kinds of mysterious feats.

Profusely Illustrated. Price, 15 Cents, Postpaid

Street & Smith, 79 Seventh Ave., N. Y. City



No. 5

$4 A MONTH
Buys This Visible
OLIVER Typewriter

Unusual offer. We are selling the famous Oliver No. 5 at a greatly reduced price. You save $44.00. We have no salesmen, no commissions, no branch houses. All this extra saving is yours. We give you a FREE TRIAL first, before you pay us a cent!

FREE Trial
Nothing Down!

If you decide to keep it, send us as low as $4 per month. This is the standard Oliver, fresh from the factory, with all the Oliver features--visible writing, marginal release, universal keyboard, etc. Don't buy till you have seen our Free Trial Offer and remarkably low price. Write us now, before you forget it. (305)

TYPEWRITERS DISTRIBUTING SYNDICATE
1510—57 E Wabash Ave., Chicago

The WORLD'S ADVANCE

In

ELECTRICITY
MECHANICS
INVENTION
SCIENCE

FREE COPY POSTPAID

A Monthly Magazine

Formerly Modern Mechanics

A FEW TITLES OF THE INTERESTING ARTICLES TO BE FOUND IN THE JUNE ISSUE:

"Typewriting by Wire."

"Solving Household Problems by Electricity."

"The Filming of Animated Cartoons."

"Telephoning by Wireless from a Moving Train."

"How to Build and Use a Sailing Canoe."

And hundreds of others just as interesting and instructive.

IN this day and age, when the attention of the world is directed to big things, it is only Mr. Sloth who disdains the soul stirring, heart gripping, interesting and instructive information regarding such events.

The frivolous popular novel is fast giving way to the vital story of facts (not fancies) illustrated in our wonderful World's Advance. Why?—very simple—such material is *valuable* because it is *instructive*, and *interesting* because it is *real*.

You get this knowledge, Mr. Man, in "The World's Advance," served in plain English—all meat and no trimmings—accurately and skilfully prepared by scientific men.

Join the students of world's affairs—let "The World's Advance" be your guide.

WRITE TO-DAY FOR FREE COPY	Just to convince you what a big money's worth "The World's Advance" offers we will send you a *free* copy if you will spend a cent to ask for it. Send your post card request to-day.

THE WORLD'S ADVANCE

227 Fourth Avenue New York City

THE MIRROR OF THE WORLD'S PROGRESS
ALL NEWSDEALERS 15¢

OMAR

Turkish Blend CIGARETTES

When a man or body of men can do something a little better than anybody else, there is a natural pride of achievement. We are proud of OMAR Cigarettes because in OMAR we have produced the *perfect* Turkish Blend, aided by all our experience and skill gained in the manufacture of billions of the world's finest cigarettes for 25 years.

Behind OMAR are all the resources of our complete, world-wide tobacco organization, without which such a cigarette would be impossible. Our expert native leaf-buyers travel on foot, camel and donkey through Oriental wonderlands—selecting the finest Turkish leaf of Smyrna, Xanthi, Serres, for this sparkling, irresistibly attractive OMAR blend.

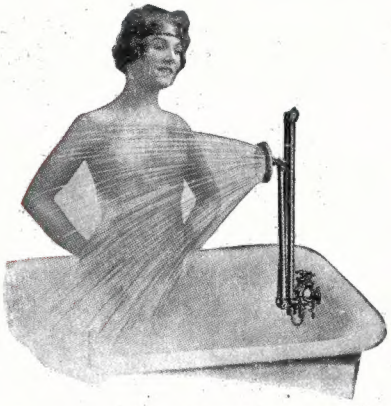
20 for 15c

Advt. THE AMERICAN TOBACCO CO.

Bathe in Running Water

Adjustable **KULOFF** **Portable**

SHOWER



Price **$10**

Much cheaper and *infinitely better* than the old fashioned shower. Instantly adjustable to any height and angle, making it an *ideal* shower for women and children.

Medical authorities recommend the Shower Bath as Tonic and Sanitary. This is the *best* and *only adjustable shower* on the market.

AGENTS Here is a seasonable proposition. Write today for prices and terms on both the KULOFF Shower and WALLACE Lamp—The most wonderful electric lamp in the world.

SAVE YOUR EYES

The WALLACE Portable Electric Lamp concentrates the light just where you want it. STANDS, HANGS, CLAMPS or STICKS anywhere, to anything, at any angle. Model C—Brass, Bronze, Nickel **$2.25**

10 Days' Free Trial *Ask your dealer or write us about it.*

WALLACE NOVELTY CO., Suite No. 19, 22 E. 41st St., New York